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THE
LAW FAMILY OF CALCUTTA

BY
KUMUD LAL DEY

CALCUTTA

1932

To
PRAWN KISSEN LAW
PIONEER OF THE LAW FAMILY
IN MODERN BUSINESS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The author of this sketch of the prominent members of the Law family of Calcutta, Mr. Kumud Lal Dey, commenced collecting information about them several years ago. He was connected with the Law family through his relationship with Mr. Bhagavati Charan Law, and had, for this reason, opportunities of coming into close contact with the members of the family. He was a resident of Chinsurah and for a long period the chief cashier of the Chartered Bank. Many of the facts that he has recorded in this account could not have been known to us if he had not noted them. Many of the details about which we may feel curious at present, but which do not appear on his notes, are lost, I think, beyond any hope of recovery. Unfortunately, he did not live to complete the work undertaken by him, as he died in

1926. The most interesting portion of the account relates to the gradual rise of the family to opulence and distinction. The author has been at much pains in collecting information throwing light on this aspect of the subject. •

Though the writings left by the author were incomplete, he left many notes and cuttings from newspapers etc. containing materials that could be utilized for completing them. This task was entrusted to Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt. The labours that have been spent by him on this task have been strenuous in view of the fact that the materials were scrappy. He has also touched up in many places the book as a whole. We must express our gratitude to him for kindly bringing this work to completion within a short time.

It should be noted by the readers that as the author died in 1926, the events mentioned in this book relate to periods before 1926.

We have a mind to publish another

volume of sketches of the life and activities of the present generation of the Law family, if circumstances permit.

In the Appendix we have reproduced those speeches of Maharaja Durga Charan Law and Mr. Joygobind Law that we have been able to find among Mr. Dey's papers. We hope to publish at a future date the speeches of Raja Reshee Case Law.

R. N. SEAL,

Calcutta, 27-9-32.

Publisher.

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RAJIB LOCHAN LAW

Barsul, now a small village in the district of Burdwan not far from the Saktigar Station of the East Indian Railway, was the ancestral home of the Laws of Calcutta. It was then a big and flourishing village; many respectable and wealthy families lived there, but the frequent inroads of the Mahrattas into Bengal for the purpose of plunder compelled many of them to remove to different places. Rajib Lochan, son of Madhu Mangal Law and grandfather of Maharaja Durga Charan, removed to Chinsurah, which was then considered a place of security. The town of Chinsurah at that time formed the Dutch Settlement: it was protected on the east by the river Hughli, on the south by the French Settlement, and on the north by the town of Hughli where the English had a factory. It was then a prosperous town,

people flocked there for amusements and festivities, many of which are no longer observed at the present time, e.g., the famous Bengali pantomime (*Sang*) in which the representation of mythical gods and goddesses and caricature of men and manners played the most important part. Rajib Lochan lived at first at Sandeswartala, and then removed to Panchanantala, where he constructed the present house. The small property which he possessed hardly enabled him to make both ends meet, and he was compelled to take service in the firm of Nandram Baijnath, a banker of Patna. He died at the age of sixty-two in 1830, leaving behind him three sons Prawn Kissen, Naba Kissen, and Sri Kissen.



Prawn Kissen Law

PRAWN KISSEN LAW

Prawn Kissen, who was the eldest of the three sons of Rajib Lochan, was the father of Maharaja Durga Charan. He was the architect of the fortune of the Law family. Notwithstanding the straitened circumstances of his father Rajib Lochan, Prawn Kissen by his own exertion acquired a tolerably fair knowledge of English. He was first employed in Mr. Andrew's Library at Chinsurah on a small salary, where he remained till the establishment was broken up. He then entered the Provincial Court of Hughli as an apprentice. He acquired during the period of his apprenticeship the habit of close application to business, and knowledge of the working of the courts of law, and this stood him in good stead in his future career. As he had none to help him in his career, he could not rise beyond the precarious position of an apprentice. His father

at last brought him to Calcutta, where he succeeded in securing the post of a head-writer in the office of Mr. Howard, an attorney of the old Supreme Court. By dint of labour and perseverance, he was able to secure the good graces of his new employer. By periodical increments, his salary was ultimately raised to Rs. 300 per month. Mr. Howard appreciated the work of Prawn Kissen so much that he granted him a pension of Rs. 200 per month on his retirement, which he drew till the death of Mr. Peard who succeeded Mr. Howard in the business. While he was in the service of the attorney, Prawn Kissen speculated in salt, opium, and East India Company's paper, but he could not make much profit out of the transactions. During this period, he won Rs. 33,000 in the name of his younger brother Naba Kissen in a lottery held by the Lottery Committee of Calcutta. He, however, lost the whole of this amount in unsuccessful speculations in the course

of six months. His abilities and varied experience attracted the notice of the renowned banker and merchant Mati Lal Sil who took him into his service and appreciated his work. It was through his friendly assistance that Prawn Kissen first became a banian to Messrs. Saunders, May, Sarkies and Co. He subsequently became banian to several other European firms. But while so employed, he carried on also a small business of his own with the help of his two brothers. Prawn Kissen received a heavy set back in the great commercial crisis of 1847 which has been so graphically described by Professor Leone Levi, but he managed to recover from it within a very short time. He died in 1853 at the age of about sixty-three, leaving for his sons property, which by the sons' diligence, sagacity and forethought, grew into an abundance which was never dreamt of by their father in the most glorious period of his life. The firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law & Co., which

was established by Prawn Kissen and his two brothers Naba Kissen and Sri Kissen. was one of the first Indian firms to compete with the European firms of the time. It continued under the same style after his death and is still known by that name. It is now one of the foremôst firms in Calcutta.



Maharaja Durga Charan Law, C.I.E.

MAHARAJA
DURGA CHARAN LAW, C.I.E.

Maharaja Durga Charan was born at Chinsurah, on the 23rd November, 1822. Chinsurah was then under the Dutch; it was not till the 7th May, 1825 that it was actually made over to the English by the treaty of the 17th March, 1824. At the age of five, he was admitted into a primary school to acquire an elementary knowledge of Bengali, arithmetic and accounts. When he was eight years old, he was sent to Calcutta for further education. English education had already begun to be appreciated by the people as a means of getting a decent livelihood and also as a passport to honour and high official positions. He was at first admitted into a small school of Mr. Gour Mohan Addy, one of the founders of the old Hindu College. He was afterwards

transferred to another school at Shib Thakur's Lane, conducted by Mr. Gobinda Charan Bysack. After studying in this school for two years, he joined the Hindu College, which was founded in 1816 and was then one of the principal colleges in Bengal. At first he did not take much interest in his college work, and was inattentive to studies, and irregular in attendance. But this did not continue long. From his boyhood, he displayed quickness of apprehension and showed all the signs of a practical turn of mind, which made him dislike superfluous or poetic expressions. His assiduity for studies became so great that he twice got double promotions and won prizes for general proficiency, and even his father became apprehensive as to the career of his boy. Being a born businessman of the old school, he thought that his son's further prosecution of studies would make him lose the balance of mind and render him unfit for the practical purposes of life. He was

therefore withdrawn from the college when he was only seventeen. One of his celebrated fellow-students with whom the schoolday acquaintance ripened into deep friendship in later years was the well-known oriental scholar Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra.

In 1839, Durga Charan was taken as an assistant in the firm of his father, and he continued in that capacity until his father's death in 1853. During the whole of this period, Durga Charan displayed an uncommon aptitude for business and showed remarkable diligence and assiduity in the performance of his duties.

From 1853 the business of the firm was carried on by himself and his uncle Sri Kissen with the help of his brothers Sham Charan and Joy Gobind and his cousin Bhagabati Charan, the son of his deceased uncle Naba Kissen. It did not take very long for Durga Charan to give evidence of his keen business acumen. He opened agencies in London and Manchester in the

very first year in which he got the full charge of the business. In a business on a large scale the risk is great but there are men with foresight who reduce it to the minimum. The coolness and farsightedness of Durga Charan steered him clear of all difficulties. He was slow to arrive at a conclusion, but once he decided upon a course of action, he was prompt and earnest in carrying it out to the finish. By his extraordinary intelligence and foresight he overcame difficulties that stood in his way and often controlled the situation. He succeeded in raising the firm, which was not so prosperous at the time of his father, to a very high and respectable status, and laid the foundation of a fortune which is perhaps unparalleled in the history of the Indian merchants of Calcutta. Business began to increase, profits swelled along with it, and the firm of Prawn Kissen Law & Co. soon occupied a leading position among the mercantile firms of Calcutta, and Durga Charan came

to be known as the Merchant-Prince of Bengal. Though the credit of the foundation of the wealth and greatness of the family goes to Prawn Kissen, the super-structure is due mainly to the intelligence, commercial talent, and unswerving rectitude of Durga Charan.

In the field of banking and commerce, one of his remarkable achievements, to which we can point, is the present National Bank of India, Calcutta. It was founded in October 1863 by Maharaja Durga Charan, Messrs. Patit Paban Sen, Hira Lall Sil, Manockjee Rustomjee, W. W. Anderson and other notable persons under the name of the Calcutta City Banking Corporation. At the time it was established, no such Bank existed in Calcutta to meet the requirements of the local mercantile firms and afford monetary facilities to the public. It was originally established as a local Bank. Durga Charan took a prominent part in its establishment and was one of its directors. It was started with a

capital of Rs. 50 lakhs and Mr. R. O. Sawyer was its first manager. Subsequently, some of the share-holders, especially the Europeans who purchased almost all the shares, became the directors and converted it into an Exchange Bank; afterwards the name of the Bank was changed into its present name the National Bank of India. In 1864 a branch was opened in Bombay, and another in London in 1866.

Durga Charan never became elated by a stroke of good fortune, and he never allowed his sober judgment to be overpowered by the excitement of the moment. Always calm, cool and dispassionate, he arrived at conclusions after duly deliberating on the pros and cons of a work in hand without being stirred by extraneous circumstances, and his conclusions were generally correct. As an instance of his business foresight, we may refer to one of his transactions in the year 1866, a memorable year in the mercantile history of Calcutta.

In that year a company was started under the name of Port Canning Company chiefly at the initiative of Mr. Schiller. The venture had indeed a short but most sensational career. A belief had gone abroad that the Hughli was going to be silted up, that Calcutta as a Port would be deserted, and that Port Canning in the Sunderbuns was to become the Port of Bengal and would attract the whole of the seaborne trade of the province. The shares were issued at Rs. 1000 each. Durga Charan was the owner of a portion of the Port Canning Land; he sold it to the Company and took its price half in cash and half in shares. The prospects of Port Canning becoming the future capital of India made people rush in for the shares, and the price of a thousand-rupee-share rose gradually to over eleven thousand rupees. Port Canning shares became the rage of the speculators. For a couple of days Calcutta was in frenzy, and the Calcutta City Banking Corporation, the Banker

of the Port Canning and the Sunderbuns Reclamation Companies, was besieged by applicants anxious to make deposits for purchasing the shares. Durga Charan foresaw that the prices could not remain steady for ever, and there must be a limit to the rise in prices, the fever heat must subside and there would be a reaction. When the price of each share had risen to eleven thousand rupees, he thought the time had arrived for selling his shares, and he sold the sixty shares held by him through the stock-broker Mr. Banku Behari Sil of Chinsurah to Mr. R. G. Ghose and others and made a clean profit of six lacs of rupees, while other speculators were watching the prices and expecting them to go up still further. Suddenly the market fell, and many speculators, Indian and European, suffered immense loss.

Durga Charan was a Zemindar and capitalist. As a Zemindar he was loved by the tenants of his extensive Zemindary. He, as a rule, never harassed his tenants, and

always gave a patient hearing to their grievances. At their suggestions, he effected many improvements which led to increased production. His remarks on the Bengal Tenancy Bill in 1883 as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council comport well with his character as a practical man. As a man of business, his industry, patience and perseverance were really wonderful; no amount of work could deter him and no arrears of work were allowed to accumulate. He reduced every thing to a system, and his methodical habits helped him a good deal in the successful management of his business. He never entered into any transaction without being sure of his ground and without probing the matter to the very bottom. He never took a leap in the dark leaving the consequences to chance. He knew where to stop and that was the keystone of his success; where others wrecked their fortune, he came out successful. During his whole career as a merchant extending over half a century, he

never suffered any serious loss on any single occasion. His prudence, sagacity and strong common sense enabled him to hold his own against the keen competition of enterprising and successful European merchants. Some of the latter for whom he acted as a banian held him in such high esteem for his unflinching rectitude and great business abilities that they entrusted him with the management of their business and empowered him to sign the name of the firm during their absence. Even those European gentlemen who had no concern with his firm or did not come in contact with him in any business, but who were only on visiting terms with him, entertained a very high opinion of his head and heart, as they could not fail to be impressed by his intelligence and the nobleness of his character.

Mr. H. E. Falk was present at his house on the 4th January 1880 on the occasion of the marriage of his nephew Ambica

Charan Law, the son of Joy Gobind Law. About the grandeur of the entertainments and the congenial and hospitable nature of the Maharaja, he wrote in his *Winter Tour through India, Burmah and Straits* thus :

It would be invidious to make distinctions where all is measured without stint, but I cannot refrain from naming two entertainments at which we had the honour to assist from their utter novelty most striking to European eyes. One was a ball in which 1000 or 1500 of the élite of Calcutta society were invited, and the other a Nautch in celebration of the wedding of a relative by one of the most opulent citizens of Calcutta, a gentleman named Babu Durga Charan Law. The former was a most magnificent entertainment in the European style. A grand illumination by many thousand coloured lamps and gas lights formed a great feature. The crowds of magnificently dressed ladies and Indian gentlemen in their gorgeous and picturesque dress blazing with jewels, was a sight not to be witnessed

in Europe. But if this European entertainment was grand, the Nautch of Durga Charan Law was from its purely Indian character a sight even better calculated to dazzle European eyes. Here we had the blaze of light in which orientals delight, both in the illuminated garden and the magnificent reception-hall to welcome a thousand guests with the Indian element in their most gorgeous attire of silk and cloth of gold, studded with jewels preponderating, an utter absence of ceremony and awkward stiffness, every guest moving freely at pleasure in the crowded rooms, corridors, and balconies with a most sumptuous supply of everything that delights the heart. Gentlemen belonging to the household assiduously distributing bouquets and delicious scents, Indian Nautch girls performing in solos and chorus their quaint ceremonial dances, music by bands of richly dressed Indian musicians with a full regimental band rendering European music, and everything joyous and merry; refreshments and wines, light or substantial, in most sumptuous abun-

dance, suitable to all tastes. The splendid host, a man in the full prime of life, is the architect of his own great fortune honestly gained in lawful commerce and a grand specimen of his race.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Ashley Eden, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief Sir Frederick Haines, the Chief Justice of Bengal, Sir Richard Garth, officials of note, leading European merchants and barristers, military officers and many European ladies were present. The band of Her Majesty's 90th Regiment was also in attendance and played the airs of welcome.

The nobility and magnanimity of his heart is perceptible even in his business dealings. Money-lending was one of the various branches of his business, but he never charged a high rate of interest nor was he exacting in the recovery of the principal and the interest. In 1873, he advanced Rs. 3,20,000 to Raja Prithvi-vallabh Pal of Narayangarh in the district of

Midnapur on mortgage of his Zemindary and other landed properties including his residence. On his default to satisfy the debt, the Maharaja was obliged to purchase the mortgaged properties in execution of his decree, and in consequence, Raja Prithvivallabh lost all his properties and was liable to be ejected from his ancestral dwelling-house, which was enjoyed by the family for many generations. On representation being made on behalf of the Raja, the Maharaja not only made a free gift of the residence including all out-offices and pleasure-grounds, but allowed him and his wife a pension of Rs. 125 a month during their lives extending over a considerable period. The Raja was highly gratified at his magnanimity, and anyhow escaped the pinch of extreme poverty. On the death of the Raja, his adopted son, who was then a minor, applied for the continuation of the pension, and though he had no claim upon it legally or morally, the Maharaja complied with his request.

This act of kindness was very little in comparison with various others, to one of which, a reference may be made to show how open-handed he was in extricating people from difficulties, specially friends who were once in affluent circumstances. About the year 1870, a respectable merchant of Calcutta who had a great reputation for honesty and truthfulness, was obliged through unforeseen circumstances to stop payment. He shut himself up in the inner apartment of his house and declined to see not only his creditors but also sympathetic friends who called on him. The Maharaja, who was a great friend of the gentleman, called at his house and on enquiry about the amount of his liabilities learnt that it was over a lakh and a half. The Maharaja expressed regret that he was not approached for the amount, at least, as a loan. The gentleman expressed his gratefulness and said in reply, "I know you are very kind to me," but though he knew

the charitable disposition of the Maharaja, he wanted to refrain from drawing his friends into the difficulties, from which it was impossible for him to save himself. The Maharaja advanced the amount to the gentleman, and enabled him to stand on his legs once more.

Of the many noble traits of character that the Maharaja had, one was his detestation of falsehood, and the other of fulfilling promises. To make a promise and then to evade it with smooth excuses was not his nature. He was very particular in giving his words, but once given it was more than a legal document. On one occasion, he promised some money to a Zemindar who was in impecunious circumstances, on the security of his landed properties. On investigation of the securities it was found that they were neither good nor sufficient to cover the loan, besides the fact that the Zemindar had no reputation for honesty. The gentleman entrusted with the investi-

gation as also the members of the Maharaja's family objected to the transaction, but the Maharaja said that as he had given word to that man, he could not withdraw it even if he were to lose the money, and consequently the loan was given.

The Maharaja personally supervised all his affairs, and notwithstanding the labour which the supervision entailed upon him, he was in the habit of studying books every night even in his advanced age. He was fond of scientific works. It was his firm conviction that the prosperity of the country depended much upon the advancement of scientific education among his countrymen. He was of opinion that the children ought to have some sort of training in the sciences in our Schools and Colleges. The alert, business-like air which prevailed everywhere in the establishment under him, industrious as he himself was, could not but impress one with the strong will and power existing

behind the organisation. He always saw to the thorough and perfect execution of the works of many and varied departments which he had under him. He was a strict disciplinarian, and hence everywhere whether in his business or family affairs order prevailed. To many who did not know him intimately, he appeared strict and stern, but in fact under a harsh exterior there was a very tender heart.

Being by nature of a retiring habit, it was difficult to meet with a man more unostentatious than the Maharaja in this age of pomp and display. Acquisition of wealth and rank never elated him. He was simple in habit and manners, quick in apprehension, deliberate in thought and careful in expression. He talked little. In the discharge of his duties, he displayed a strong common sense. He was very particular about his own duty and responsibility. While earning money, he was not unmindful of his brothers and cousins. To his sisters and nephews he was very kind.

During a distinguished career, extending over forty years, he took keen interest in many important public movements, which derived great benefit through his ripe judgment and varied experience. For some time before his death, his failing health prevented him from taking any active part in public affairs.

He was elected a member of the British Indian Association in 1858 and became its President in 1885, 1886 and 1895. His services as a President were greatly appreciated, and a meeting of the Association was held on the 28th May 1904, shortly after his death in which it was resolved that a memorial would be raised to his memory and that it was to take the form of a portrait to be placed in the hall of the British Indian Association. His portrait has since been hung up in that hall.

He became a Director of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Bengal Bonded Warehouse Association, and the Commercial Union Assurance Company. He was ap-

pointed a Justice of the Peace, an Honorary Presidency Magistrate, and a Fellow of the Calcutta University.

Under the presidency of Durga Charan the Hughli District Association was established on the 16th October 1876 at a meeting held at the Chinsurah Barracks. The object of the Association was to take up all questions relating to the welfare of the people of the district of Hughli and to seek for redress of grievances by every legitimate means. The Rev. Lal Behari Dey, Messrs. Bhudeb Mukherji, Lal Behari Dutt, Nando Lal Dey were some of the prominent members of this Association. At the inaugural meeting of the Association the Rev. Lal Behari Dey introducing Durga Charan said, "I will not say much of Babu Durga Charan Law in his presence, but this I may be permitted to say that the Association ought to congratulate itself on having obtained his consent to become its President. Babu Durga Charan Law's name will be a tower of

strength to the Association, and his wisdom, his sagacity, his experience in public affairs will give moderation to our counsel and attach importance to our representations." Durga Charan took very great interest in the Association so long as it existed.

Durga Charan was the first Indian to be appointed a Port Commissioner. On account of his sound practical sense and judgment he was an asset to the Port Trust. In consideration of his unique position in the Calcutta commercial community, he was often consulted by the Government in matters of administration, and was entrusted with responsible positions of trust. He became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council in the year 1874 and of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1882. He was elected a Governor of the Mayo Hospital in 1878 and a Commissioner for the reduction of public debt in February 1882. In the same year he was made the Sheriff

of Calcutta. The title of Raja was conferred on him in 1887, and the Companionship of the Indian Empire on May 24, 1884. In August he sat on the Octroi Committee of Bengal, representing Indian commerce, and recommended that the Octroi was not a desirable tax, not only from the inequity of its incidence, but also from the difficulty which would attend the levy of such a tax in Calcutta. He became for the second time a member of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1891. On the 27th January the title of Maharaja was conferred upon him and he was exempted by the Government of Bengal from personal attendance in Civil Courts. For many years he held the office of the President of the Indian Committee of the District Charitable Society.

He was trusted not only by his own countrymen, but also by the Europeans. How highly he was held in the estimation of the Government is apparent from the following speech made

by Sir Stewart Bayley, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, on the occasion of his investiture with the title of Raja :—
“I welcome you here to-day with great pleasure as one with whom my acquaintance dates back a quarter of a century. Whether as a leading representative of the Indian mercantile community, as a member of the Legislative Council, as a Sheriff of Calcutta or as a trusted adviser of Government and exponent of feelings of your countrymen, you have rendered valuable service to your country and to the Government which was recognised three years ago by the bestowal on you of the Companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire, and which is now in the year of Her Majesty’s Jubilee further rewarded by the title of Raja which the Viceroy has been pleased to confer on you.”

The Maharaja had a soft corner in his heart for the poor and the suffering, and it is evidenced by his charities and services in connection with the cyclone of

1864. The 5th of October of the year will for a long time be remembered as the date of the great cyclone which swept over a large portion of Bengal. Among the masses it is still the starting point of calculation of events. Such violence of a hurricane had not been witnessed for a long time. Masonry buildings were thrown down, trees uprooted, huts blown away, and boats sunk. Winged Furies seemed to have got loose, spreading destruction, devastation, and misery all around. Many lives were lost and many more became homeless. Durga Charan helped many people of Chinsurah who suffered from the cyclone. It was followed by a severe drought; there was almost no rain in 1865 and the result was the great famine of 1866. Durga Charan opened a relief centre at Dharampur, a suburb of Chinsurah, and fed hundreds of people every day with food cooked by brahmins. This was continued for several months till the severity of the famine abated.

The Maharaja also showed liberality in other ways. He made a munificent donation of Rs. 50,000 to the Calcutta University, and founded many scholarships and free-studentships in the Presidency College, the Hughli College, and the Hindu School of Calcutta, which still enable many poor students to receive University education.

Durga Charan's munificence was not confined to the encouragement of education only. He gave a donation of Rs. 5,000 to the Mayo Hospital in 1887, and Rs. 24,000 to the District Charitable Society and the Suvarnabanik Samiti. The charitable fund which he created, afforded allowances, ranging from Rs. 2 to Rs. 15 per month and aggregating Rs. 5,000 per year, to the poor and needy, and preferentially to widows and orphans.

In 1883 the Municipality of Hughly and Chinsurah made a scheme for the construction of water-works. Maharaja Durga Charan at once came forward to offer a

donation of Rs. 10,000 towards the undertaking, but at the same time he wished that no additional tax should be imposed upon the rate-payers for the immunity. An extract from the letter, which he wrote to Mr. Wyer, the Chairman of the Hughli Municipality, shows how much he felt for the people of his town. He wrote:—

I and my brothers have left Chinsurah and have come to live permanently in Calcutta; we shall still be most happy to subscribe Rs. 10,000 towards the furtherance of the object the Municipality has taken in hand, as a mark of our regard and sympathy for the people of Chinsurah.

In offering this contribution, I venture to express a hope that the Municipality may be enabled to confer this boon of a pure water supply on the people without recourse to increase of taxation and also to so lay out this supply as to bring it within the reach of the bulk of the Bengalee population of both these towns.

He felt also keenly for the inconveniences

suffered by the third class passengers and made useful suggestions in connection with the Railway Bill. From his place in the Council he strongly urged the necessity for the introduction of latrine accommodation in the third class railway carriages. He dwelt on the necessity for latrine accommodation in third class carriages and said that it would be a matter of extreme disappointment to the millions, who travel by rail but who have not the power to make their wants and wishes known to the legislature, if no arrangement was made to remove their grievance. †

From the above remark and his evidence before the Sub-committee of the Public Service Commission in 1877, it will be observed how he always stood by his countrymen, and whenever opportunity occurred, he tried his best to advance their cause. In 1878 when the Chamber of Commerce addressed the Government for

† See Appendix, pp. 145-150.

reducing and restricting the Durga Puja holidays to four days only, a representative committee was appointed to consider and report on the question (see note p. 189). Mr. Kristo Das Pal and the Maharaja who were members of the Committee recorded their dissent as follows :

Considering that the arrangement made by Government in 1874, by which the Custom House is kept open during the Durga Puja vacation except for five days and the jetties work without intermission, the inconvenience to the trade of the city is not serious, that the number of holidays in Bengal is less than that in the other provinces, that a general vacation of seven or eight days during Christmas does not in any way affect or inconvenience commerce in Madras, that it is a general holiday for all classes of the public servants for rest, recreation and travelling, that it affords almost the only opportunity to the officers of the lower grade to visit their mofussil homes once a year, that from the point of view of health, a rest of 12 to 15 days

in a year is of great importance for it enables the Government officers to discharge their duties much more satisfactorily than what they could if no periodical rest was allowed, and that its curtailment would give rise to much hardship and dissatisfaction among the Hindu employees as well as other employees of the Government, and also among the general public whose business engagements are regulated by the practice in the public offices, we are of opinion that no change in the present Durga Puja holidays is called for.

The speech delivered by Maharaja Durga Charan, supporting an amendment of the Ilbert Bill, which raised a storm of discussion between the Indians on one side and the Europeans on the other, reveals how independent, bold, and reasonable he was in the expression of his opinions on matters of public interest. The measure which was introduced in 1882 to amend the Criminal Procedure Code with a view to empower the Covenanted Indian Civilian to exercise jurisdiction over Europeans

in their capacities as District Magistrates or Sessions Judges as a matter of administrative convenience, evoked a strong feeling at the time. This measure was known by the name of Ilbert, the Legal Member of the Council. It was the result of a letter of Sir Ashley Eden written to the Supreme Government shortly before his retirement. The friction and bitterness of feeling created by it at the time between the Europeans and the Indians, the former considering it to be derogatory to their dignity to submit to the jurisdiction of the Indian Judiciary, will long be remembered in the history of British administration in India. A European defence association came into existence; both the Europeans and the Indians avoided travelling in the same compartments of railway carriages; public meetings were held by the Europeans to protest against the measure and to give vent to their feelings; abuses and vituperations were exchanged in public newspapers. The agitation subsided, but the

undercurrent of rancorous feelings, however slow and imperceptible, existed below a calm and smooth surface, and much of this feeling has influenced subsequent events in the history of British India. The speech that was delivered by the Maharaja in the Imperial Legislative Council is given in the Appendix.*

Maharaja Durga Charan breathed his last at the age of eighty-two at 10 p.m. on the 20th March, 1904 (7th Chaitra, 1310), leaving behind him two sons Raja Kristo Das Law, and Raja Reshee Case Law. His death was regretted by all, Indian and European alike, and all the newspapers of the day referred to the qualities of his head and heart, and recorded their sense of grief at the demise of a great son of Bengal. The *Capital* of the 24th March 1904 writing about his death said :

“The death of Maharaja Durga Charan Law C.I.E., head of the firm of Messrs. Prawn

* See pp. 6-18.

Kissen Law and Co., at the ripe age of eighty-two, removes from our mercantile community, a man of noble character, whose business ability, public spirit, and high honour, pervaded by the inborn charm of dignified courtesy, revealed a gracious personality. The best wish I can express for the new Maharaja is that the mantle of the father may descend upon his son”.

The *Statesman* of the 23rd March, 1904, mourning his loss wrote :

‘By the death, in his 82nd year, of Maharaja Durga Charan Law, C.I.E. there has passed away one of the leading Bengalees of his generation and perhaps the most remarkable member of the Indian mercantile community in this city’.

The Daily News of the same date gave vent to the sorrowful feelings in these words :

“The death of Maharaja Durga Charan Law, C.I.E. which occurred on Sunday last, removes from the ranks of Indian noblemen to-day a prominent and distinguished figure.

The late Maharaja has been stigmatised by one of his biographers as 'a product of British rule', and if by this is meant that he is one of those who have risen to a high position by his own exertions and a just appreciation of the duties of a citizen of the British Empire, then, indeed, was the deceased nobleman 'a product of British rule,' and one of whom both the Empire and his compatriots have had every just reason to be proud. Maharaja Durga Charan Law may truthfully be said to have died full of years and full of honours; for he had reached the great age of eighty-one, and was a personality who had earned the respect and admiration of all with whom he had been brought into contact''.

The *Indian Mirror* and the *Bengalee* of the 22nd March, 1904 wrote long obituary notices mentioning the various qualities possessed by the Maharaja. The following extracts from the *Bengalee* are worth perusal :

"We are deeply grieved to announce the death of Maharaja Durga Charan Law, C.I.E.

which melancholy event occurred at his residence at Thunthunia at 10 p.m. on Sunday the 20th instant. The late Maharaja was eighty-two years of age and it may be truly said of him that he was the very personification of commercial shrewdness and success.

Of his success as a merchant there can be no two opinions. We believe we are not wide of the mark when we say that during the whole of his career as a merchant extending over half a century, he had never seriously burnt his fingers, no, not even on a single occasion. In recognition of his unrivalled position in the Bengalee mercantile world, he was the first Bengalee to be appointed a Port Commissioner. Indeed, all sorts of honours and distinctions were conferred upon him by Government whose confidence he possessed to the last.

He had many noble characteristics which the rising generation would do well to imitate. He hated nothing so much as falsehood and was remarkably punctual in keeping his engagements. He did not talk much but what

he said was said with due deliberation and caution. He was not in the habit of making lavish promises but when he made a promise he would fulfil it at any cost. In his personal habits, a more unostentatious man never lived in this age of display and extravagance. The architect of his own fortune, he attributed his phenomenal prosperity to the grace of the Almighty, modestly disclaiming any credit for himself. He was a man of stern rectitude and, while amassing wealth, he was not unmindful of his brothers and even cousins.

To commemorate his great name a marble bust was raised to his memory by his friends and admirers. It adorns to-day the corner of a staircase in the Town Hall of Calcutta.

SHAM CHARAN LAW

Mr. Sham Charan Law was the second son of Mr. Prawn Kissen Law and younger brother of Maharaja Durga Charan. He was born at Chinsurah in 1825, and was about three years younger than Durga Charan. He was at first admitted into Hare School which originally belonged to the School Society, and subsequently, he was transferred to the Hindu College. Here he obtained a scholarship. But at the early age of nineteen, he was withdrawn from the college by his father who placed him in his office to learn the business of a merchant, and thus his career commenced under the direct supervision of his father. He was quick and intelligent, and in a short time, he mastered the intricacies of the business, and on the death of his father in 1853, he became a partner of the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law and Co.



Sham Charan Law

In connection with the firm, Sham Charan visited England in 1869 to gain a first-hand knowledge of the working of the great commercial firms of the country. The knowledge which he thus acquired was employed with great advantage after his return from England in directing the business of the firm. The *Hindu Patriot* in its issue of the 12th January, 1891, thus speaks of him with reference to this visit : “His tastes were well cultivated, and his travels in this country as well as in Europe afforded him a measure of experience that stood him in good stead both in connection with his flourishing business, and in the society of which he was justly regarded as an ornament.” It should be noted in this connection that he was the first among the people of his own caste to break through the trammels of orthodoxy and visit England,—an act which at that time was regarded as a serious offence against the social and religious laws of the Hindus. Consequently, a nest of hornets was raised

around him, on his return from Europe, and some of the old-fashioned orthodox families of Chinsurah, sought to excommunicate him and his family. They took advantage of the opportunity presented by the marriage ceremony of his nephew Reshee Case, the second son of Maharaja Durga Charan. The orthodox group tried their best to gain as many adherents as possible in order to outcaste Sham Charan, his brothers and cousins, but their efforts were baffled by the remarkable intelligence and circumspection of Maharaja Durga Charan and his cousin Bhagavati Charan as also of the well-known Jiban Pal of the Pal family of Chinsurah. They were reduced to such a minority that they themselves were on the point of being excommunicated.

The business ability of Sham Charan was by all means inferior to that of his brother Durga Charan. He contributed a good deal to the improvement of the status and prestige of the firm, of which

he became a partner since the death of his father. For every transaction done by the firm he was consulted by Maharaja Durga Charan. On account of his strong common sense and foreign experience he was able to give sound advice to the Maharaja in all business and social matters. Like the Maharaja, Sham Charan was also of a benevolent disposition and a man of strict probity.

He was a Director of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway for several years, an Honorary Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, an Honorary Magistrate of 24-Perganas, and a Member of the District Board of the same district. He was a member of the Consulting Committee of the East Indian Railway, and was appointed several times a Commissioner of the Cossipore Municipality. He took great interest in the annual College and Judicial Re-unions which were held every year in his Garden at Cossipore.

In October, 1889, Sham Charan made a

gift of Rs. 60,000 for the construction of an Eye-Infirmary attached to the Medical College of Calcutta. The foundation-stone of the building was laid by His Excellency the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne. It is, however, a matter of deep regret that Sham Charan did not live to see the opening of the institution. He suffered for some time from diabetes, and he died of that disease on the 3rd January, 1891, at the age of sixty five, leaving behind him an only son Mr. Chandi Charan Law.



Joygobind Law, C.I.E.

• JOYGOBIND LAW, C.I.E.

Mr. Joygobind Law, the youngest son of Mr. Prawn Kissen Law, was born at Chinsurah in the District of Hughli on 1st January, 1836. After finishing his school career, Joygobind entered the firm which was and still is known by the name of Prawn Kissen Law and Co. There he gained a first-hand knowledge of the business and mastered the details. His business talents quickly developed, and he gave proof of undoubted capacity to manage the great commercial firm. He rendered considerable assistance to his brothers in raising the business to a highly prosperous condition. The commercial foresight of the three brothers and their knowledge of the fluctuations of the market were remarkable. The profit resulting from the large transactions, into which their firm had successfully entered for many years past, was invested in

the purchase of big Zemindaries and other valuable properties and Joygobind and his family now stood on the same footing with those ancient houses which formed the aristocracy of the land and which were held in honour and esteem by the highest officials under Government.

Joygobind received a good training in various capacities. He was for nearly thirty years a member of the Calcutta Corporation, and took a lively interest in its deliberations. For a long time he dispensed justice as an Honorary Presidency Magistrate of the 24-Parganas. Two or three times he was elected a Port Commissioner. He was appointed Sheriff of Calcutta in 1895; in 1897-98 he became a Member of the Viceregal Council, and in 1899 he received the title of C.I.E. in recognition of his various services. He was appointed a Governor of the Mayo Hospital, a Visitor to the Presidency Jail and a member of the Consultative Committee of the East Indian

Railway. He was a member of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and President of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce for several years. For sixteen years he was a member of the British Indian Association, of which he became a Vice-President in 1900. The British Indian Association in their resolution dated the 1st February 1906 acknowledged the valuable services rendered by him to the Association both as a member of the Managing Committee and as a Vice-President. In 1901 he was elected to represent the Calcutta Corporation in the Bengal Legislative Council.

Joygobind always took an active interest in the public questions of the day. He possessed a strong common sense, a thorough knowledge of the country and its people and of the commercial world. He was a man of few words and retiring disposition; he never indulged in platitude or verbosity. He never sought for popularity; his motto was that all

honour lies in doing one's duty well. He was a man of refined taste. His favourite study was Chemistry and Astronomy, and he kept a small laboratory of his own. He was well known as a floriculturist; he carried away several prizes at the flower-shows in Calcutta, and most of the distinguished men of the town resorted to his house in Sukea Street to see his orchids in flower.

He died of heart-disease on the 8th December 1905, at the age of seventy-one, leaving behind him his only son Ambica Charan Law.

He greatly felt for the poor. He was for some time the President of the Suvarnabanik Charitable Society. He placed at the disposal of the local Government, Municipal debentures to the value of a lakh of rupees for the creation of an endowment for the relief of distressed persons within the province of Bengal. The fund was intended for the help of those who suffered from the effects of flood,

drought and other similar causes, specially those respectable but poor people who would not resort to Government relief works, and for providing food and raiment to the aged and infirm. Besides his numerous private charities, the Calcutta public will remember with gratitude his donations for investigation into the properties of snake-poison of various kinds and of their remedies and antidotes, and also for the erection of a laboratory in the Calcutta Zoological Garden.

BHAGAVATI CHARAN LAW

Bhagavati Charan was the son of Naba Kissen, the younger brother of Prawn Kissen. He was born at Chinsurah in 1831. He grew up under the care of a mother possessing in a marked degree the good qualities of head and heart. His uncle Prawn Kissen looked upon him as his own son, and brought him up with all the loving solicitude of a person fully alive to the heavy responsibility resting upon him by the death of a dear and beloved brother. At six years of age, Bhagavati was sent to a local *pathsala* where he acquired some rudimentary knowledge of Bengali, learnt the art of writing and the elementary rules of arithmetic. His English education commenced at the Hooghly Collegiate school, into which he was afterwards admitted. He was, however, removed by his uncles Prawn Kissen and Sri Kissen to Calcutta, where he was put in the Hindu School.



Bhagavati Charan La

Bhagavati Charan acquired a fair knowledge of English in this school. As his uncle Prawn Kissen thought it proper to train him up in the practical works of life and initiate him into the duties of a merchant, he was removed from the school and placed in his office, where he obtained a comprehensive training in various sorts of business. After the demise of Prawn Kissen, his son Durga Charan took his cousin Bhagavati Charan as a partner of the firm of Prawn Kissen Law and Co. Durga Charan appreciated his business ability and approved the way in which he conducted work in the office. After the death of Sri Kissen, Durga Charan placed him as a banian in the firm of Messrs. C. P. Henderson and Co. for managing their work. He looked after their import and export business. Later on he became the banian of the firm of Messrs. John Elliot and Co. There he managed their vast concern in import and export and other business with marked ability till his death in 1875.

Bhagavati Charan was the principal trusted adviser of Maharaja Durga Charan and his brothers in the management of family affairs, and he was of very great help to them in other respects.

He encouraged female education. Schools for imparting education to Hindu girls were in existence at Chinsurah, but they were all under the management and supervision of Christian Missionaries and in these the Bible was taught. Bhagavati Charan established the first girls' school in Chinsurah at his own house, which had no connection whatever with the missionaries. It was conducted under his own supervision, and the school thrived well under the able management of its secretary, Mr. Nimai Chand Seal, who is well-known as the author of some dramatic works. Large sums of money were spent by him every year not only for the management of the school, but also for the distribution of prizes to the girls for their encouragement.

He was a man of great moral rectitude. Being of a kind and charitable disposition, he was always ready to help the poor; every call of distress produced a vibration in the tender chord of his heart. Whenever he heard of others' difficulties, unasked and of his own accord, he extended his helping hand to them. He was very unostentatious and preferred to help the people in distress secretly. There are several instances of his relieving poor but respectable gentlemen who would rather starve than ask another for help. He had a religious turn of mind, and followed the best principles of the Hindu religion. A noble-hearted man like him cannot help being religious. He was tolerant and he made allowance for the frailties of others. He was a dutiful son, a loving husband, a tender father, and a staunch friend. He had the knack of disarming antagonism. No one could be in his company without feeling a strong desire to make his friendship.

In 1859 he visited several villages such as Kulti, Badla, Balgona, and other places in the district of Burdwan to inquire into the means of livelihood and earnings of respectable people of all castes reduced to poverty by adverse circumstances, specially, of widows and orphans. As a result of this inquiry, he created a family fund for the distribution of monthly charities to the poor without distinction of caste or creed. That fund still exists, and it is not possible to estimate the benefit conferred by it upon the poor, old, and infirm and the widows and orphans, who have been the recipients of the monthly allowance since its creation in 1859.

He in fact dedicated his life to rendering help and service to the destitute. His self sacrifice in connection with the cyclone of 1874 will ever be remembered by the people of Chinsurah.

For the first time in the history of Chinsurah, Bhagavati Charan set up in Ashadh, 1266 B.S., an amateur theatre in that

town for the delectation of the people, and the *Kulina-kula-sarvasva Nāṭaka* was the first drama that was represented on the stage. Chinsurah was one of the places where Kulinism prevailed to a large extent. Many of his friends and relations took part in the performance which proved to be a great success. A violent cyclone occurred in the middle of October, 1874, and the principal scene of its devastation was the Burdwan Division. Its violence is stated by some to have far exceeded that of the cyclone of 1864. Chinsurah also suffered from the ravages of the cyclone. A famine followed. Gaunt famished people from the different parts of the country stalked about the streets of Chinsurah. Bhagavati Charan's heart was moved. He took steps at once for the relief of the sufferers, and made Dharampur, a suburb of Chinsurah, the centre for distributing alms to the poor. Every Saturday and Sunday, he stayed at Chinsurah, and distributed money to them as subsistence allowance for a week,

and also gave cloths to those who were in need of them. Thus months passed, Dharampur was then a hotbed of malaria. Bhagavati Charan caught that fatal disease, while he was engaged in his charitable work. He suffered long from this fell disease, but did not give up his benevolent work till he was bedridden. He breathed his last in Calcutta on the 29th March, 1875, leaving behind an old mother and an only son Shib Charan. His death was aptly described at the time by his friends and the poor people of Chinsurah as an "Indrapat" (the fall or death of Indra, the god of heaven),—with such esteem he was held by those with whom he came in contact. He has no memorial raised to him for perpetuating his memory, but he still lives in the grateful remembrance of them all. By his will, he bequeathed Rs. 5,000 to the Mayo Hospital of Calcutta. He had many private charities.

His mother continued to live in the

house at Panchanantala, Chinsurah, till her death on the 12th Sraban, 1288 B.S. (5th August, 1881 A.D.), a circumstance which compelled Maharaja Durga Charan and his brothers to leave Chinsurah and reside permanently at their house in Cornwallis Street in Calcutta, where they had been staying from before, visiting often their old aunt, the mother of Bhagavati Charan at Chinsurah.

RAM CHARAN LAW

Ram Charan, son of Sri Kissen, uncle of Maharaja Durga Charan, was born at Chinsurah on the 13th September, 1850. In 1873 after leaving the Presidency College, he was taken as an assistant in the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law and Co. In January, 1879 he set up an independent mercantile firm of his own, which was carried on by himself and his sons, notwithstanding his shattered health since 1900. Like his cousins, Ram Charan took great interest in the works which were useful and beneficial to the public. The old burning Ghat at Chinsurah, known by the name of Seal's Ghat, became dilapidated and the river having receded far from the Ghat, it became almost useless for the purposes of cremation. As there was no other Ghat, the people of Chinsurah and also the people of distant villages felt great inconvenience. Ram Charan removed this



Ram Charan Law



Sri Kissen Law

want of the people by erecting at a considerable cost a new burning Ghat on a high masonry plinth to protect it from being flooded over by the river during the rainy season. At a short distance from it he constructed two Gaṅgāyātrī rooms with a verandah where the relations of those who are brought to the side of the Ganges at the last stage may conveniently put up. He has made a gift of the New Burning Ghat and the Gaṅgāyātrī building to the Hughli and Chinsurah Municipality.

In 1903 the Passia road which joins the main branch road to Lalghar near Madhupur in the district of Sonthal Pargana was constructed mainly through the pecuniary help given by him. The road is 1 mile in length and 8 feet in breadth with a bridge in the middle for allowing waters to pass under it to both sides of the meadows. The construction of the road conferred a great benefit upon the people of the neighbourhood who are generally poor, being mostly cartmen and goatherds.

RAJA KRISTO DAS LAW

Raja Kristo Das, son of Maharaja Durga Charan was born at Chinsurah in February 1894. He was educated in the Hindu School and read for some time in the Presidency College. He was an Honorary Magistrate of 24-Parganas, and also an Honorary Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta since May 1888. Though he always preferred to live a quiet life and loved solitude he was not unmindful of the fact that the public expected some service from him, being the elder son of the great Maharaja Durga Charan. He was offered many public offices and he had to accept them, but once he accepted the offices, he took them up seriously and discharged punctiliously the responsibilities entrusted to him. This will be apparent from the words of Sir Edward Baker, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal who said among other things while invest-



Raja Kristo Das Law

ing him with the title of Raja in August 1910: "You have held the office of Sheriff of Calcutta; you are a Presidency Magistrate, a Governor of the Mayo Hospital, a member of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Vice-president of the British Indian Association, President of the Suvarnabanik Charitable Society, and a Trustee of the Victoria Memorial Fund. In all these offices you have comported yourself with credit and dignity, worthily maintaining the name of your family. You are a recognized leader of Indian society in the capital of the Province, and you have contributed handsomely to a variety of public objects. The distinction that has come to you has been honourably earned, and I am glad to think that it has been received with general acclamation by the public of Calcutta."

Besides the public offices mentioned by the Lieutenant Governor he was also a member of the Imperial League, the General Committee of the King Edward

Memorial Fund, and the President of Subarnabanik Samiti, and in the last capacity he has done much for the cultural progress of his community. He was made the Sheriff of Calcutta on the 19th December, 1906.

The Raja has given evidence on many occasions of his independence of judgment. He did not hesitate when he deemed necessary to protest against the measures of the Government which were not approved by him. To protest against the Calcutta Improvement Bill, the Indian and European citizens of Calcutta organised a Town Hall Meeting on Friday the 31st March, 1914. It was presided over by him and the meeting was addressed by many distinguished gentlemen of the city like Messrs. B. Chuckerbutty, Gonesh Chandra Chunder, Nogendra Nath Mullick, Saroda Charan Mitter, Budruddin Haider, Kalinath Mitter, Radha Churn Pal, and Surendra Nath Banerjea. In his presidential address, the Raja said :

“I beg to thank you for the high honour you have done me by electing me as President of this meeting which has been convened to express our views on such an important matter as the Calcutta Improvement Bill. In taking the Chair on the present occasion, I feel how undeserving I am of the honour, and I only hope I may be able to fulfil my part to your satisfaction.....

Unrestricted power given under section 35 to the new Board, intended to be formed with reference to the Improvement Scheme, to acquire ‘any buildings in any area’ is what I strongly protest against. I cannot understand why the Land Acquisition Act should be altered to make it so very drastic, inasmuch as the present Act has proved quite sufficient for the purpose of acquiring land and the recoupment of the cost thereof, without putting any undue pressure on the ratepayers. I mention the instance of the acquisition of lands for the Harrison Road in support of this point. Besides for purposes of improvement new sources of income have

also been allotted to the intended Trustees, and under the circumstance it appears to me that a drastic measure like the one proposed seems to be quite uncalled for and unnecessary. There are many other sections and clauses of the Bill as amended by the Select Committee which are likely to cause grave discontent and hardship amongst the inhabitants. All these will be dealt with by the different speakers who will hereafter address the meeting."

Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea, the great leader of Bengal in moving the vote of thanks to the chair complimented the Raja in these words :

"It now devolves upon me to perform a duty—a pleasant duty—which, I am sure, will meet with your unanimous support. I beg to move that the cordial thanks of the meeting be accorded to Raja Kristo Das Law. We are very fortunate in having the Raja as our Chairman. He is no agitator, but a merchant—a prince among merchants—a Zemindar and a prince among Zemindars, having an enor-

mous stake in the country. All his interests and his sympathies are bound up with the Government. He would not move against a Government measure, except under a sense of paramount necessity. That he should be with us in our protest is significant of the enormous volume of public opinion that is arrayed against the Bill."

Raja Kristo Das is the present head of the Law family of Calcutta and as such he with his brother and two cousins made a handsome donation of Rs. 75,000 to the Benares Hindu University and of Rs. 100,000 towards the Chinsurah and Hughli Water Works. With regard to the latter gift the *Indian Mirror* (15th July 1910) made the following remarks :

"This is liberality in its truest sense, which exalteth the donor all the more by reason of the fact that it is accompanied by no outward show. The Hughli Water Works were in contemplation during the life-time of the late Maharaja Durga Charan. His sons Raja Kristo Das Law and Raja Reshee Case Law,

who have been worthily emulating their distinguished father in various philanthropic and charitable works, were both born at Chinsurah, and it is this fact, we believe, which primarily accounts for the princely liberality."

'Always calm, cool and sedate, his common sense and vast experience carried him through all the intricacies and difficulties in the management of his extensive properties.

Before the ushering of the Minto-Morley Reforms in 1909, the Government of India elicited opinions on their tentative proposals about the constitution and powers of the Imperial and Provincial legislatures which were then called Advisory Councils. On the invitation of the Government, Raja Kristo Das also sent his opinion. We shall quote here a few lines to show that even in 1906 how much the Raja sympathised with the national movements for Self-government. Criticising the Government proposals, he wrote among other things, that the Imperial and the Provincial Advisory

Councils as proposed by the Government would be purely consultative bodies, without legislative recognition and without any power whatever; its proceedings would be private, informal and confidential and the Government would be at liberty to make any use of them that they thought proper. Here however, no assurance has been given that their advice would be followed. The members of the Advisory Councils being all appointed by Government without election will not be the representatives of the people, and would not hold any position whatever on account of their not being recognised as a formal body.....As regards the Legislative Councils, taking into consideration their constitution, composed as they would be mostly of Government officials and Government nominees, popular view will not have much weight therein, and any enlargement of their constitution would only serve to delay more than at present the passing of measures; hence no special advantage would be gained by the expansion of the Legislative

Councils.....The non-official members have the rights of interpellation and of discussion, and of making remarks on any Government measure when the Budget is brought forward. Each one of them has a vote which for all practical purposes is useless. Their function therefore in the Legislative Council is of no real importance.....

I am afraid that unless Government after the promise already alluded to make concessions allowing the people to have a strong voice in administrative matters, they would get worse discontented than they are at present.....

It would not be out of place to give another well-known passage from the Great Queen's proclamation of 1858: 'and it is our further will that so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.' I do not quote this from the Queen's Proclamation in any carping spirit, but would point out the

unwillingness with which those pledges have been complied with in little particulars, and the trifling with a document on which the loyalty of the people of all India rests..... These are some of the circumstances which would naturally lead the people to misunderstand and mistrust the motives and measures of Government. Where the heads of Governments trifle with pledges such as these, would it be at all likely that their subordinates would pay due respect to law in the administration of justice? Hence such acts always lead to discontent and misrule. Should the Government desire to know how criminal justice is administered in the mufasil, they have only to make a cursory enquiry in order to be convinced of the truth of this statement. The prestige of Government is based on the impartial administration of justice in this country, both as regards law and every other matter, and we have the example of the Calcutta High Court as to how the prestige has been and ought to be maintained. Rewards and punishments should be

impartially and fearlessly apportioned according to the requirements of justice—and herein lies the secret of bringing about harmony between the rulers and the ruled.....

It is now patent to every body that the partition of Bengal has been a mistake, and that this has brought about a host of troubles, the like of which was never known before in this country. It is human to err. Even so late as this, if Government can make up their mind to adopt some one of the measures suggested by the people, it will go a great way to smooth their temper everywhere, and not in Bengal alone. *Bande Mataram*, which means 'I bow to my mother', is an innocent term, but since some classes of people are apt to get enraged at it, the boys, as is their nature all over the globe, use it for fun. The best course to adopt in such a case is to remain unruffled. This advice was all that was needed to check the freak. *Boycott* was ostensibly directed to do injury to the import merchants, but they have neither asked Government to interfere, nor have they suffered any material

injury therefrom. The Government ought not under any circumstance of their own initiative to try to find out offenders of this nature in order to get them punished..... *Bande Mataram* and *Boycott* were introduced, when all known ways of constitutional agitation to stop the Partition of Bengal failed, and they served the purpose of giving vent to feelings of disappointment and anger naturally arising under the circumstances. It was necessary to soothe such a feeling, and not irritate it by Police oppression and by letting loose soldiers on the innocent. For a single offence committed by the people, the subordinate officers of Government have committed ten in retaliation.

Raja Kristo Das was a man of austere disposition. His sternness and taciturn habit made his subordinates as also his sons and nephews hesitate to approach him except on business. He was a nationalist at heart but few could know it. He was fond of studying ancient Indian treasures like the *Vedas* and the *Upani-*

RAJA RESHEE CASE LAW, C.I.E.

Raja Reshee Case, the younger son of Maharaja Durga Charan, was born at Chinsurah on the 4th May, 1852. He was put into the Hindu School along with his elder brother. At this time Mr. Mahesh Chandra Banerjee was the Head Master of the School. In those days, when the University Examinations were very stiff, Reshee Case passed the Entrance examination and joined the Presidency College in 1869. After studying there for about a year and a half, he was put by his father in the firm of Messrs. Kelly & Co., as an assistant for receiving practical training in the management of business on a large scale. Under the guidance of Mr. White, he quickly picked up the details of import and export business. With his sharp intelligence and unflinching assiduity, it did not take him long to learn all the sides



Raja Reshee Case Law, C.I.E.

of the busieess, in which the firm of Messrs. Kelly & Co. was engaged. He continued there for some time as a representative of the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law & Co. who acted as the banian of the arove-mentioned European firm.

The business acumen which he had developed by coming into contact with the European merchants, and the inexhaustible fund of energy possessed by him could not escape the discerning eyes of his great father, who began to devise ways and means for giving full scope to the abilities of his worthy son. As he himself managed the business of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law & Co., he wanted to see his son manage a firm independently and without his direction. Reshee Case appreciated this idea of his father and established a new firm in 1880, called Messrs. Kristo Das Law & Co., after the name of his elder brother. The firm had a prosperous career under his management. He used also to assist his old father in the manage-

ment of his business and later on, on his demise, he took over the charge of the parent firm Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law Co., along with his brother and cousins and left the firm established by him to the care of his sons and nephews, to whom the conduct of business of the firm of Messrs. Kristo Das Law & Co., became a good field for business training.

In addition to his duties, he found time to assist his uncle Shama Charan Law in the management of the vast Zemindary acquired by the Maharaja. But as time would have it, Shama Charan's health broke down and the whole responsibility of the Zemindary fell upon his young shoulders though he was still uninitiated into the intricacies of the management of landed properties. But by virtue of his keen insight and untiring energy, he soon proved himself equal to the task, and personally supervised the intricate details of business in the Zemindary department. Every letter from the mofussil offices, which

were scattered over the different parts of Bengal, viz., in 24-perganas, Jessore, Khulna, Midnapore, Comilla, was read out to him in the morning and at noon, and on every one of them he gave the necessary directions. Bills and the complicated Zemindary accounts were also examined by him from time to time in order to keep his officers in check. Under his supervision, the income from Zamindaries also greatly increased reflecting credit on his ability and industry. But he was never an exacting zemindar. He increased the income of his landed properties mostly by developing them. His treatment towards his tenants has been throughout kind and charitable; whenever his tenants were adversely affected by famine, flood or shortness of funds, he gave them relief by remission of rents, advance of agricultural loans, and charities. He always encouraged his tenants by giving donations for opening dispensaries and schools. Anyone who traverses through his exten-

sive zemindaries cannot but notice satisfaction of the tenants in their dealings with their zamindar. He cannot help administering his landed properties through appointed officers, but it should be remembered that he used to keep a faithful staff of inspectors and supervisors to keep watch over his mofussil officers, and personally heard their reports about the grievances of the tenants and remissness of his employees in the various zemindaries and took the necessary steps to remove the complaints. In Bengal, I think, a more contented tenantry can hardly be found, and I am sure, the tenants of the Law Raj will bear me out in this opinion of mine. It is all due to his sense of duty, his constant endeavour to do everything in the best way possible.

'After a whole day's strenuous work, young Reshee Case had his usual constitutional in the open air in the grounds of his father's palatial residence and spent the whole evening in cultural pursuits.

Though he was weaned from his college life at an early age, he retained his love of study and devoted the best portion of the evenings to reading, or listening to persons appointed for the purpose of reading out to him selected books on religion, history, economics, and politics. He was a voracious reader of some high class English weeklies and monthlies. Among his favourite monthlies, we may mention the *'Asiatic Review'*, the *National Review*, and the *Investors' Review*. He has been reading them from cover to cover for the last forty years and even now at the advanced age of seventy, his routine of work would not be complete without devoting at least three to four hours every day to study. His varied taste for reading is revealed in his collection of books, which have all been preserved and have to-day grown into an excellent library. Two or three evenings of the week, he kept reserved for listening to Pandits reading out and explaining the original Sanskrit

works on Hindu religion and philosophy.

Songs and music formed one of his recreations, and he himself tried for some time to learn the art of playing on musical instruments, of which he specially preferred the *Tablā*. But this was only a passing hobby of his life and failed to produce on his mind any impression of consequence.

Up to his fiftieth year, his interest was confined to the management of his zamindari and business, and in fact, it demanded so much of his energy and labour that he hardly found time to give serious thoughts to any other subject. About this time, there came a call from within that he should participate in services to the country in which he was born. Since 1888, he has been discharging the duties of a few public offices, such as the Honorary Presidency Magistrateship of Calcutta, to which he was appointed on the 15th May, 1888; the Honorary Magistrateship of 24-Par-

ganas ; Governorship of the Mayo Hospital and the Refuge ; membership of the British Indian Association, the Imperial League, and Trusteeship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons ; but in discharging these functions, he could not find opportunity to show his talents to the fullest extent, specially his capacity for organisation.

*In the Bengal National Chamber of
Commerce*

The opportunity presented itself to him in the month of August, 1906 when he was requested to become the President of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce. This commercial body was formed at a meeting of the Indian Merchants held on the 2nd February, 1887, with Rai Budreedas Bahadur as its first President and Mr. Sitanath Roy as its first Honorary Secretary. The members of the Law family took great interest in the growth and welfare of this Chamber from its very in-

ception. Mr. Joy Govind Law, uncle of Raja Reshee Case, was its sixth President. Maharaja Sir Manindra Chandra Nándy held the Presidentship after him for five years from 1902-1906, when Raja Reshee Case succeeded him in the high office. Having the welfare and progress of his country at heart, he thought that the best way of serving his country would be by forming a powerful organisation of Indian merchants of Calcutta, whose opinion would be valued by the Government, and hence, would go a great way to ameliorate the condition of his countrymen. At this time the Minto-Morley reforms were in vogue, and the country was just awakening from its slumber. The reforms did not confer on the people any substantial rights and the only course open for bettering the condition of the country politically was that of persuasion and personal influence. The Raja's high family tradition created by his distinguished father combined with his genial temper and frank-

ness, and above all, his integrity, and mastery over facts and figures, drew a large number of English friends around him in addition to his many friends among his countrymen and it was with their help that he was able to advance the cause of his country in many directions. Being a man of few words, his opinions or requests were always given a serious thought by the officials.

As the Government was just then introducing the system of associating a few representative Indians in the capacity of advisers or members of the governing bodies of the important institutions like the Railways, Port Trust and so forth, the Raja took the opportunities by the forelock and managed to secure for the Chamber the privilege of sending representatives to many such bodies. It was practically at his persistent request backed by the weight of the Chamber of which he was the President that the Government agreed to increase the representation of the Chamber

on the Council from one to two, and on the Port Trust from one to three.

Since his time, the Government made it a point to ascertain the opinion of the Chamber on almost every important step that it proposed to take, and it may be said to the credit of the Chamber and its President that the opinions were very often received favourably both by the public and the Government. We shall quote here a few words of Lord Hardinge to show how much the Chamber was raised by the efforts of the Raja in the esteem of the people. Lord Hardinge in his reply to the Address presented by the Chamber on the 28th December, 1910 said :

“I can speak the more frankly to you, gentlemen, because I feel that you represent some of the most substantial interests of the community and the most sober sense of this ancient Presidency. I say this in no spirit of flattery, and I think my words are justified by a reference to your Chairman’s (i.e. Raja Reshee Case’s) speech of two years ago.....

You are constantly consulted by the Government on questions affecting not only the commercial community but also the general welfare of the people.”

It is not possible here within a short space to recount the innumerable activities of the Raja during his presidency for twenty-six years, for it would amount to writing the history of the Chamber from 1906 to 1931. He identified himself so much with the Chamber during the period that there was hardly any important affair which did not bear his impress. The annual presidential speeches delivered by him contained a general survey of the commercial and political activities in the country, and the parts taken by the Chamber in them. The *Capital* of September 5, 1919 reviewing one of his speeches wrote :

“Raja Reshee Case Law’s presidential address at the annual meeting of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce was a com-

prehensive survey of the economic condition of the Presidency, and disclosed that acuteness of vision which we have come to associate with all his public utterances. What he said about jute should arrest the attention of his fellow countrymen: 'We have, no doubt, a good number of jute mills in Bengal, but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that they consume only about half the production of jute, and there is still a wide scope for further expansion. It would certainly be more economical and would greatly promote the interests of the ryots as well as the consumers, if a large portion of the raw materials could be retained in the country for the purpose of manufacture. It is certainly humiliating to us that we have as yet no hand in an industry, the raw material of which is the monopoly of Bengal. The Raja would have done well to rub it in by contrasting this slackness of the Bengalees in the jute manufacturing industry with the enterprise of the Bombay Parsis, Khojas and

Bhattias in the cotton manufacturing industry.”

• Most of the speeches were replete with facts and figures, and as such they form an excellent material for compiling a politico-commercial history of Bengal from 1906-1931.

On the need of Technical Education

As the President of the Chamber he was naturally anxious to ascertain the causes for the backwardness of his Province in the fields of commerce and industry, and it did not take him long to find out that the one-sided over-literary tendency of the University education was mainly responsible for same. He felt long ago the need of a fully equipped Technical and Commercial College for the scientific training of youngmen for industrial and commercial pursuits. In the Address given by the Chamber to the Viceroy on the 23rd December, 1916, he pointed out this desideratum in the education imparted by

the University, and the Viceroy was also good enough to say that he would see to its provision under the Calcutta University. Dwelling on the need of technical education he said in one of his presidential speeches :

“We hope that institutions for imparting technical and scientific education would be established in the different parts of the country for giving proper training to boys who are now under the necessity of going to foreign countries for the purpose of learning the manufacture of soap, hoisery, leather-tanning, etc. On this point, great weight must be attached to the opinion of the first Congress of the Associated Chamber of Commerce which was held in London in 1880. It ascribed the rapid progress and high excellence of Continental manufactures to the schools of technical education, which for many years were established in Germany and in other parts of the Continent, and by means of which the arts of design and other valuable

scientific knowledge were generally acquired, to the great advantage of industrial pursuits, and the Congress, therefore, insisted upon the importance of establishing technical institutions in Great Britain to maintain the pre-eminence of English manufactures."

He hoped, what technical institutions had done for the progress and prosperity of England, would do also for India, and strongly urged for their establishment in the Province.

Year after year from his place in the Council, he pointed out to the Government the lack of adequate provision in the Budget for the opening of Technical and Industrial Schools. In the course of his Budget speech (1911), he expressed regret at the poor sum of Rs. 54,000 allotted under the head of Technical and Industrial Schools saddled with the note that "Larger deductions may be made for probable savings with reference to actuals." Criticising the Budget in 1914 he said :

"The sum of one lakh allotted to Manual

Instruction is to my mind wholly inadequate. The scheme of adding a modern side to elementary education which is in accord with the most advanced educational ideas of the West, but which has not hitherto received due attention, would, if carried out on a proper scale, be one of the most potent factors in shaping the educational and industrial destiny of the Province. Manual instruction in most civilised countries is now regarded as a part of liberal culture, and in India it is specially needed to create industrial aptitudes in the young and tender minds, and thus lay the foundation of the industrial progress of the country. An early training of the eye or the hand can alone correct the over-literary tendencies of the Indian mind. The department of manual training in our ordinary schools is therefore a most important though costly department which will create the taste and the demand for industrial careers, and will be the ultimate recruiting ground of the elaborately planned Technological Institute

which Government are going to establish. I should therefore recommend this important reform of modernising our school education to a more generous consideration of the Government and plead for large grant for the purpose.”

Appreciating this portion of the Raja's speech the *Indian Mirror* of the 7th April, 1914 wrote :

“Raja Reshee Case Law made excellent observations on the importance of manual education. He very aptly said that an early training of the eye or the hand can alone correct the over-literary tendencies of the Indian mind, which are fostered by the existing literary Universities as distinguished from modern technical Universities such as those of Manchester, Birmingham or Leeds, the like of which has not yet come into existence in India.’ The wisdom of these remarks is quite obvious.”

On the need of Primary Education

Next to the dissemination of technical

education among the boys of his Province, the Raja was keen about seeing wide diffusion of primary education, as he realised three decades ago that the salvation of the country lay in it. As the Chairman of the District Board, 24-Perganas, he tried his best to increase the number of schools and raise the amount of Government grants. Most of his budget speeches in the Council were marked by a criticism of the lukewarmness of the Government in this direction, and an insistence for an increase in the annual grant to primary schools.

Encouragement of Home Industries

Side by side with the advocacy for the expansion of technical education, the Raja, a practical man and a patriot as he was, took every opportunity to impress upon the people the need of revival of indigenous industries and prevailed upon the Government to foster home industries. Presiding over the Khulna Exhibition held at Khulna

on February 12, 1913, the Raja expressed his "particular pleasure in encouraging the organizers of the exhibition because it had for its object the development of the resources of the district and served as a great impetus to agricultural and industrial development." (See the *Bengalee*, Feb. 4, 1913).

He was very enthusiastic over the inauguration of the Bengal Home Industries Association and heartily joined the movement initiated by the Government for the same. At the inaugural meeting held at the Dalhousie Institute on the 1st February, 1917, he supported the first resolution which deplored the present condition of the home industries, arts and crafts of Bengal, and welcomed the proposal to establish an Association for their promotion and development.

"The proposal to establish an Association for the promotion and development of the home industries, and arts and crafts of Bengal appeals at once to the patriotic feelings

of every one who has got the welfare of his country at heart. Its establishment will inaugurate a new era in the economic history of our country. An organisation like this, it is hoped, will not only resuscitate the muslin industry of Dacca, but stimulate the weaving industries of Birbhum, Chandernagore and Santipore, the silk industries of Ghatal and Murshidabad, the pottery works of Krishnagore, the ivory works of Murshidabad, the lacquered works of Birbhum, the filigree works of Dacca, and various other arts, crafts and industries which can neither flourish nor be developed for want of capital and skilled labour. Moreover, small industries are eminently suited to the economic condition and environment of Bengal and to the aptitude and genius of the people, inasmuch as they are too much devoted to the interests of domestic life, too sensible of the bliss and bonds of family affection, to be ready to repair to the cities in search of higher wages

offered by the urban manufacturing industries. Consequently, Bengal is the natural home of cottage industries. Capital also in Bengal is both small and shy and pre-eminently individualistic in its character. Hence it always shrinks from joint-stock concerns. It is therefore in the field of smaller domestic or home industries, of arts and crafts that labour and capital can find their proper scope for employment. I have no doubt therefore that the association will be quite successful."

In the British Indian Association

Next to the Chamber, the Raja's interest naturally turned to the protection of the rights and privileges of the Zemindars, and he found the British Indian Association organised by his father Maharaja Durga Charan, Raja Rajendralal Mitra, Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Maharaja Narendra Krishna Deb and other leading Zemindars of Bengal to be a suitable body

for carrying on his activities in the interest of the Bengal Zemindars. He became its Honorary Secretary and held that office for 13 years, latterly, becoming its Vice-President and President (1925). The Government also attached much importance to this influential body and very often invited their opinions on the important measures that the Government proposed to introduce from time to time for the improvement of the country. In short what the Raja had done as President of the Chamber he did as Secretary of this 'Association. As Jt. Hony. Secretary of Bengal Zemindars' Conference he defended as far as possible the interest of the Zemindars at the time of the amendments of the Bengal Tenancy Act brought up in the Bengal Legislative Council. For that reason, however, he should not be regarded as a conservative Zemindar of the old class who turned a deaf ear to the petitions of the tenants. His own Zemindary administration has always been marked

with a tenderness of heart for the poverty and sufferings of his tenants and a desire to improve their condition.

On the Improvement of the Rural Areas

He keenly felt for malaria eating away the vitals of Bengal and attributed it to the want of suitable waterways and supply of drinking water in the rural areas of Bengal. He insisted upon the Government to set apart a portion of the Road Cess to remove these wants, for he said that "the Cess Act (IX of 1880) in the preamble provided for the construction and maintenance of other works of public utility and section 109 also provided for the construction and maintenance of any means and appliances for improving the supply of drinking water." When it was expressly laid down in the Act, he said that there could be no objection to a portion of the collection being applied to the reservation and maintenance of tanks for the supply of pure drinking water.

'As such expenditure is obviously included in the main objects of the collections under the Act, he wanted that in the not distant future, the rural areas would be supplied with good drinking water which would save the inhabitants from the attacks of malaria and epidemics which were decimating the country every year.

'As a Zemindar and a member of the District Board of 24-Perganas for 37 years, his heart naturally turned towards the sanitary improvement of the rural areas, the expansion of primary and technical education, and the agricultural development of the country. It was as if the mission of his life was to fight out the malaria, which had been creating havoc in the villages by pushing on the drainage schemes, and to help the agriculturists with proper guidance, supply of improved varieties of paddy and jute seeds and establishment of model agricultural farms. He repeatedly drew the attention of the Government for making efforts to popularise

“ the cultivation of cotton on an extended scale with a view to make the people of Bengal independent, in course of time, of obtaining their supply from the sister provinces, as the mills for manufacturing cloths were gradually increasing.” (The *Englishman*, April 8, 1920).

In the District Board of 24-Perganas

His devotion for the improvement of the rural areas attracted the attention of the Government, and he was selected as one of the few non-officials to manage the District-Boards when the transference of powers from the Government officials to the elected representatives of the people was first experimented upon. So, on the 23rd December, 1917, he was elected as the Chairman of the District Board, 24-Perganas, and was re-elected on the 26th November, 1918. An untiring worker as he was, he personally supervised the works of the District Board and inspected the repairs to roads, buildings of

schools, dispensaries, and similar other institutions. For this work of supervision he never took a penny as travelling allowance to which he was entitled and he used his own motor car for the purpose. He risked his health by touring day after day over malarious villages, and though advanced in years he did not mind the joltings and jerkings of the car while motor-ing miles and miles over the unmetalled and muddy roads of the villages. This self-sacrificing work of his won the admiration of both the public and the Government.

In the Bengal Legislative Council

On the 14th December, 1909 he was offered a membership of the Bengal Legislative Council and he held it with distinction for more than a decade and a half. Being fully acquainted with facts and figures as the President of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and the Secretary of the British Indian Association

and having first-hand knowledge of the condition of rural areas, he was an acquisition* to the Bengal Council. He hated trumpeting out views just for the sake of taking part in the discussions, but he would not let an opportunity pass when his knowledge and experience could throw light on the topics under discussion. He was often given a place in the Select Committees of the Council and his advice was sought for in the framing of many bills. He always took an active part in the proceedings of the Council. He gave a patient and careful thought to the Bills that were brought before the Council from time to time and prepared his amendments, many of which were accepted without discussion. His speeches in connection with the amendments proposed by him to the Calcutta Improvement Bill are characterised by a vigour and earnestness prompted by a deep sense of the injustice done to the people by some of the clauses which ignored their vested rights, and at the same time, they

show a deep insight into the working of similar Acts in the European countries. How strongly he criticised the Government and defended the interest of Calcutta house-owners will be patent from these few words of his :

“I regret that the Hon’ble Member in charge of the (C.I.) Bill expressed his opinion in the Select Committee that the landlords of Calcutta are solely to blame for the bad condition of the city, and therefore deserve punishment, quite forgetful of the fact that the Government are more to blame in this direction than the landlords. Town-planing is not their *forte*, and if they had been guided by Government in the early days by rules and regulations regarding the planning of sites and open spaces, the defects which are now visible would never have occurred. Government have, however, made some amends by way of a grant of 50 lakhs of rupees but this is too small for the purpose, and instead of allowing one section of the

community to be sacrificed for the good of another, they should, in common fairness, have made a further grant of 50 to 60 lakhs. This would have avoided the necessity of inserting one of the most objectionable clauses in the Bill."

In the field of politics he belonged to the advanced moderate school and has always protested against the poor instalments of reforms that have been accorded by the Morley-Minto or Montford Reforms. Speaking of the former in 1910 he said that the reforms did not entirely come up to his expectation. They may be considered, he said, as the first instalment of a great reform and he hoped that British statesmen who never do things by halves would give the full measure of reform..... (*Annual Presidential Speech*, 1910).

Criticising Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, he remarked that "no amount of representation or misrepresentation, argument or counter-argument could obscure the fact that there had grown up a strong

genuine and widespread determination among the people to see India raised to the status of the other dominions of the British Crown and this could not be checked by sops. The unequal treatment meted out to India as a dependency is not and can never be in keeping with the national self-respect of India. India should therefore be raised to the status of Canada, Australia, or South Africa."

He also condemned dyarchy introduced by the Montford Reforms. He was of opinion that the "classification and the arrangements made to run the departments were very artificial. The Government being an organic whole and the different parts inseparably connected with each other, and the departments more or less interdependent, one could not be taken away and made to function alone and hence the basic principle of the dyarchy was wrong."

He was a leading figure in the field of politics during the first two decades of the

20th century. He worked in unison with men like Mr. Bhupendra Nath Bose, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, and S. J. Motilal Ghose. The reports of the Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council still testify to the fact how one of them moved an amendment or resolution and the others supported it in the Council.

The Government appreciated his independent but reasonable criticisms so much that they offered him a seat on the Imperial Legislative Council which he however declined. Commenting on this the *Capital* wrote :

“It is an open secret that the Raja was much distressed when he heard that Lord Carmichael wished him to be the Indian Commercial member in the Imperial Legislative Council and rejoiced when the honour was shifted to his friend Rai Sitanath Roy Bahadur. He is not lacking in patriotism but he is wise enough to perceive that he serves India best by serving Calcutta first and last.”

In the Calcutta Corporation

He became the Municipal Commissioner of Calcutta on the 28 March, 1906, and continued in that capacity for about two decades continuously. Though he was not a Ward Councillor, he never refused patient hearing to the grievances of the citizens of Calcutta, doing his best to remove them. He gave them so much time and energy that few knew that it was not his duty as a Ward Councillor. As a President of the Building Committee he avoided being hard upon the aggrieved house-owners, but for that reason, he did not relax the rigour of the laws so much as to bring in indiscipline.

For his expert knowledge of finance he was an acquisition to the Corporation. Being a merchant and financier, his opinions on financial matters were exceedingly valuable, and as such the Corporation officials like Mr. Nilambar Mookerjee and Rai Bahadur Preonath Mukherji always consulted him before launching upon any

scheme entailing a big financial responsibility. Even recently, when the new Corporation applied to the Government for sanction for floating a loan, they were directed to have their proposal revised by the Raja, and the Government gave the necessary sanction after his approval was recorded. About his ability in matters relating to finance, the *Capital* once wrote : “ If an elected minister could be entrusted with the portfolio of finance, Raja R. C. Law would be the man for our money. He knows more about the internal trade of the Presidency than a dozen average men in Clive Street, also more about the way to finance it economically and profitably.” It was this public confidence in him and his expert knowledge that led the authorities of the Imperial Bank of India to choose him as a Director and sometimes as a Vice-President and Governor of the Imperial Bank.

In the Corporation he was mainly responsible for the equitable settlement of

the question of " square mile," and in this his Zemindary experience stood him in good stead.

He rendered signal service to the old Corporation by his instructive note on Gas Lighting, in which he pointed out by facts and figures how gas could be had at a cheaper rate, and about which Mr. J. C. Aparcar remarked that " the Maharaj Kumar 's Note had been compiled from text books of recognised authority and after reference to English Statute Law, and it drew attention to many important points which the technical adviser did not know or on which he did not give the benefit of his knowledge; it would repay careful perusal and no doubt would receive the consideration of the Commissioners that it so well deserved." This Note served as an eye-opener to the then Executive heads who then made the Gas contract at a much lower rate and saved about half a lakh of rupees annually.

He took a very lively part in the discus-

sions at the general meetings of the Calcutta Corporation. His passages at arms with Mr. S. C. Ghose and Mr. Pugh in connection with the proposal for the establishment of City Civil Courts (see the *Bengalee*, March, 25, 1915) or with Mr. A. C. Patterson in connection with the Hatkhola Bazar (see the *Patrika*, May 28, 1914) show how well posted he was in regard to facts and how ably he joined issue with his opponents and defeated them without indulging in personal recriminations.

The part played by him as a member of the Port Facilities Committee (11th Dec. 1913) to save the Hatkhola Jute Bazar is too well-known in Calcutta to need mention. Still, we think a few appreciative remarks of the newspapers will be of interest to many. The *Hindoo Patriot* (25-5-1924) wrote :

From the cloud-land of predictions to which Messrs. Payne and Patterson had lifted the controversy, it has been brought down to solid earth and the sober region of facts by an ex-

ceedingly able note from the pen of the Hon'ble Raja Reshee Case Law than whom the Indian commercial interests could not find a more superb and capable champion nor one whose word carried greater weight with the Government and the European community 'generally.'

The *Bengalee* wrote two editorials on the note (April 9, 1914 and May 19, 1914). From the second, we shall quote a few lines :

“The Raja proves conclusively and convincingly that the removal of the jute trade from Hatkhola will mean considerable loss to the income of the Municipality. Land will depreciate in value, rents will go down, while the contribution to the Fire Bridge will be a heavier item than at present since the income from the jute warehouses for this purpose will be lost. Raja Reshee Case estimates the loss of income to the Municipality at a lakh of rupees. His opinion is traversed by Mr. A. C. Patterson, who speaks somewhat

patronisingly of 'the Raja's customary honesty and moderation.' He considers the Raja's views and estimates pessimistic and puts forward his own as more reasonable and in keeping with facts. What sensible man in Calcutta would accept Mr. Patterson as a greater authority than Raja Reshee Case Law on such a subject? The Raja has an enormous interest in the city and is familiar with business of every description. Why should his estimates be less reliable than those of Mr. Patterson? If the Raja's objections are disregarded, the Municipality will have themselves to thank for any loss they may suffer as we are sure they will."

In the course of his presidential speech at the Bengal Provincial Conference, the Hon'ble Mr. B. Chakravarty remarked:

"We have also noted with regret how the Report of the Port Facilities Committee, if given full effect to, will prejudicially affect the existing jute mart at Hatkhola in Calcutta owned by Indians and we are indebted to our

esteemed friend the Hon'ble Raja Reshee Case Law for his illuminating note of dissent in this connection." (See the *Patrika*, April 13, 1914).

Very few now remember how much the Raja was responsible for creating a public opinion in favour of a self-governing constitution of the Calcutta Corporation, which has brought into existence the present Swaraj Corporation. To refer to one of his activities in this connection, we may mention that he was the mover of one of the main resolutions relating to this matter in the Town Hall Meeting held on January 29, 1916. The first resolution was moved by the Raja and seconded by the Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea. The resolution ran thus :

"That this meeting while deeply grateful to the Government of Bengal for undertaking to revise the Calcutta Municipal Act is of opinion that the constitution of the Calcutta Corporation should be revised on the following lines :—

(a) That the office of President of the Corporation should be separated from that of the head of the Municipal Executive and that both the President and the head of the Municipal Executive should be elected by Municipal Commissioners, the election of the latter, if need be, being subject to confirmation by Government.

(b) That with a view to give the rate-payers an effective voice in the control of their Municipal affairs, at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members of the Corporation should be elected by the different wards.

(c) That the authority of the Corporation should be supreme and that all proceedings of the Executive Committees should be liable to revision by the Corporation, as under the Act of 1876 and 1888. As a necessary sequel, the system of co-ordinate authorities should be done away with."

In the Calcutta Improvement Trust

As a citizen of Calcutta, his interest

next to that in the Municipal Corporation naturally turned to the Calcutta Improvement Trust. In its Bill stage in 1914, he voiced the opinions of the Calcutta citizens from his place in the Council and vehemently defended their interest as against the vituperations of the European members of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. A perusal of his speeches in this connection in the Council shows how minutely he studied the Bill with his eyes upon the rights of the Calcutta house-owners, and what a vast amount of information he collected about such city improvements effected in Berlin, London and Bombay, and how he silenced his European opponents by quoting passages from the speeches or works of writers of authority like T. C. Horsfall and H. Rider Haggard on European city improvements.

In his speech in the Bengal Council on the 23rd August, 1911, he pointed out by facts and figures the mistaken notion of the Europeans that Calcutta was full of

“grandlords.” From the statistics of the Calcutta Corporation he showed that 87 per cent of the house-owners owned houses worth less than Rs. 20,000; while only 2·27 per cent owned houses worth more than a lac of rupees. He argued strongly in favour of the retention of the 15 per cent statutory allowance, as he thought that its withdrawal would only press very hard on the poor house-owners.

He pointed out the lack of sympathy on the part of the Government and said “ that the Bill omits all attempts at co-operation with the people, which is the keynote of success of a measure like this, as will be manifest on a reference to section 56 (2) of the Housing and Townplanning Act, 1909 ” (see the *Patrika*, August 23, 1911). In the Bengal Council the citizens could not expect to have a better champion of their rights than the Raja. He was always supported in this matter by Mr. Bhupendra Nath Bose and Rai Sitanath Roy Bahadur.

In January, 1912, the first elections to

the Calcutta Improvement Trust were held, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce returning Mr. Thomas of Messrs. Thomas & Co., the National Chamber of Commerce the Hon'ble Rai Sitanath Roy Bahadur, and the Calcutta Corporation Raja Reshee Case, Dr. Banks, and Rai Radha Charan Pal Bahadur. The *Bengalee* (January 27, 1912) commenting upon the election of the Raja wrote :

“The Hon'ble Maharaja Kumar Reshee Case Law is returned by the general body. We congratulate him on his election. He has done good work in the Bengal Council in connection with the Bill and we have no doubt he will worthily represent the rate-payers, and with courage and independence, stick to their interests.”

While the *Patrika* (January, 26, 1912) wrote :

Maharaja Kumar Reshee Case is a proved man, who, with his *usual independent spirit*, will look to the interest of the poor residents

and house-owners whose number is legion and who will be much more largely affected than the rich land-owners.”

It is needless to mention that during the whole period (1912-1927) he was on the Calcutta Improvement Trust, he espoused the cause of poor house-owners and lessened their hardships as much as possible. There are still hundreds of house-owners who remember how kindly in his treatment he was to them and how he saved them from the oppressive rigour of the law. He hardly absented himself from inspection duties, and always heard the complaints of the local people. There is no gain-saying the fact that the Raja always felt for the poor and stood by their cause, be it in the Corporation, in the Improvement Trust, or elsewhere.

His Humanitarian Works

Of the very many humanitarian works undertaken by him in his public capacities,

two at least need special mention. We should refer first to the hard labour put in by him in connection with the Burdwan Division Flood Relief Fund. On Friday the 8th August 1913, occurred the most disastrous flood in the Burdwan Division in the province of Bengal, caused especially by the breaches in the embankments of the river Damodar. Such a disaster occurred last in September 1823 (1230 B.S.) about a century ago. Entire villages were swept away, houses collapsed, cattle were destroyed, loss of human life and property was very great. The sufferings of the homeless and the destitute beggared all description. A monster meeting, representing all classes of people from all the districts of the province, was convened in the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 22nd August, 1913, presided over by His Excellency Lord Carmichael, Governor of Bengal, to organise relief works in the affected area, with a Central Executive Committee in Calcutta. Raja Reshee Case

was appointed an Hony. Secretary of this Committee.

The report shows that he was able to raise more than a lakh of rupees, his personal contribution being Rs. 5,000 and spent the whole amount in giving to the distressed.

His second humanitarian work was in connection with the Ramkrishna Society, Anath Bhandar. It appears from the proceedings of its sixth Annual General Meeting held at the Union Chapel Hall, Dhurumtala Street under the Presidency of the Hon'ble Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of Bengal that he used to take a lively interest in the affairs of the Bhandar and was re-elected as a member of the Executive Committee. He also made a donation of Rs. 1,000 on the occasion. In recognition of his services for over 20 years, the members of the Bhandar have hung up his portrait in oil colours in the hall of the Society. The Chairman of the Bhandar on the occasion of unveiling

the portrait on the 9th September 1930, spoke highly of his many-sided activities and referred to the qualities of his heart in these terms :

“He is noted for many noble virtues. He is a man of strong principles and of high culture. Although one of the richest men in Bengal he is always very modest in his dealings and amiable in his disposition. He is revered and respected by all, rich and poor, for his honesty of purpose and for his business habits. His charity is well-known. He considers it a sacred duty to be of any help to the poor and those really in need. He is associated with a number of Institutions of noted utility.” “The Building Fund of the Bhandar was inaugurated under his auspices and it was mainly through him that it has been possible for the Institution to have such a decent and permanent habitation of its own.” “The Bhandar is thus indebted beyond measure to Raja Reshee Case Law and the portrait before you has been provided for

in the discharge of our deep gratitude towards him only to a small degree.”

The other charitable societies with which he was, or is still actively connected are Indian Famine Charitable Relief Fund, (1908); Bengal Branch of the Imperial Indian Relief Fund (1914); Maharaj Mata Hindu Widows and Brahma Moyee Hindu Orphans' Fund; Bengal Committee of King George's Fund for Sailors; Suvarnabanik Charitable Association; and Eastern Bengal Famine Relief Fund (Hony. Secretary).

His part in the Rammohan Library Foundation

The Raja has given also ample evidence of his appreciation of higher culture and made efforts for its dissemination among the people. One of his laudable works in this direction is in connection with the foundation of the Rammohan Library, of which he is the Vice-president and Trustee. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Bose in course of a speech “referred to the un-

tiring devotion of the Raja in the cause of the Library, adding that they were indebted to him for the very plot of land on which the building stands.” (The *Bengalee*, *Jany.* 24, 1915). The opening ceremony of the Library was performed by His Excellency Lord Carmichael on the 13th December, 1913. The speech delivered by the Raja welcoming His Excellency reveals what a lover of culture he was and how much he wanted the intellectual advancement of his countrymen. He said :

“It was indeed a happy moment when the idea for establishing a Library in this quarter was first conceived with the laudable object of furnishing a centre for the development of the intellectual and literary taste of the people of the neighbourhood and of the promotion and cultivation of friendly feelings and intercourse among them.....It is now really a place for recreation, a place for study and a place for improvement, where our fellow

citizens could be well employed.....It is associated with a great name, a beacon of light, a name connected with the intellectual and spiritual progress of the people of BengalWe want plenty of books of different characters to suit different tastes and thereby draw different classes of people for the cultivation of intellect and for the promotion of friendly feelings among them.”

The other cultural institutions in which he took interest are : Calcutta College of Physicians and Surgeons (as Trustee), Aṣṭāṅga Āyurveda Vidyālaya (as Trustee); Indian Musuem (as Trustee and Treasurer); Art Gallery of Calcutta (as member), Bengal Economic Association (as Member); North British Academy of Arts (as Fellow) and Bose’s Research Institute (as Member).

*In the Port Trust, Railway Advisory
Committees, etc.*

The foregoing account of the activities of the Raja is only a poor attempt to bring out what service Raja Reshee Case rendered to

the country in his own way. He was a silent worker, and much of his work he accomplished in the small committees, whose detailed proceedings are never widely known. Very few can realise how he could carry his point to the finish even in places where the European element was in overwhelming majority. He served on the Advisory Boards of both the East Indian and Eastern Bengal Railway, and could manage through his personal influence and weight of experience and knowledge to redress the grievances of Indian traders regarding transport and freight and better the condition of the third class passengers, by making provisions for their conveniences, viz., opening of restaurants at stations, supply of drinking water, timing of trains and so forth.

He served on the Port Trust as a Commissioner for about two decades and there too, inspite of the overwhelming majority of the European commissioners, he pleaded for and advanced the cause of the Indian

employees. He was an able champion of the Indian employees who very often approached him whenever they were unjustly treated or their rights and privileges were adversely affected by any office order. Knowing fully well that his efforts to redress the grievances of the employees in the formal meeting of the Commissioners would not meet with success, he very often approached the Chairman personally, convinced him of the reality of the grievances and had them removed.

Government's Recognition of his Services

The Raja came so much into prominence during the short period of eight years of his public career which he began only in 1906, that the Government came forward to give him a proper recognition by conferring upon him the titles of Raja, and Companionship of the Indian Empire simultaneously in 1913 and by making him the Sheriff of Calcutta from the 20th December, 1914. While investing him with the title

of Raja, His Excellency Lord Carmichael said :

“I congratulate you very heartily on the title of Raja which has been conferred on you as a personal distinction. You belong to a family possessing wealth and influence in Calcutta. You have followed the example of your father, the late Maharaja Durga Charan Law, C.I.E. and have ungrudgingly devoted your time and energies to furthering the welfare of your fellow citizens. In March last I had the pleasure of investing you with the badge of a C.I.E. Now it again gives me the pleasure to invest you with the title of Raja.”

As a Sheriff

He was made a Sheriff of Calcutta in 1914. His appointment was hailed with delight by the Europeans and the Indians alike. Some of the Indian public bodies offered him receptions, one of which was held at the Rammohan Library, on January

23, 1915. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu, according him a hearty welcome, referred to the fact that it was the fourth time that this signal honour had been done to a member of the Law family and spoke of the liberality of the Law family in the cause of public charities. (*The Bengalee*, Jany. 24, 1915). One of the most prominent organs of the Europeans, the *Capital* (9th December, 1914) welcoming his appointment, referred to the various services rendered by him and we cannot help quoting an extract from it to show how he stood in the esteem of the public :

“It was a real pleasure to hear that the Government had recognised the sturdy, albeit unostentatious, civism of the Maharaj Kumar Reshee Case Law by appointing him a Sheriff of Calcutta for 1915 in succession to the Hon’ble Mr. F. H. Stewart. The Maharaj Kumar is a Bengalee gentleman of the old school which did so much to help the East India Company to establish itself in Bengal. He is a long-headed

man of business with a conspicuous talent for public finance. The Calcutta Municipality, the Port Trust, the Bengal Government themselves have profited much by his advice and guidance in this direction, and were he not so modest, his fame as a financier would be imperial. There are many men in the public eye, whom Sir William Meyer deems it convenient to consult on financial matters, who are really tyros, some of them are charlatans, compared with Maharaj Kumar Reshee Case Law, but they trade on a self-advertisement which he disdains. In business and public life the Maharaj Kumar is shrewd, urbane, straight and tenacious. Of his tenacity we had a fine illustration in his stand, last spring, against the destruction of the Hatkhola Jute Bazar. His other qualities have been admired by all with whom he has been associated for years in his numerous civic activities. In private life, his greatest charm is an old world courtesy which recalls to the student of history the durbars of

Wellesley and Moira. The Raja's father made an ideal Sheriff. His appointment opened a new epoch in the history of Calcutta. There can be no possible doubt but that the son's performance will shed a new lustre on a Bengalee house revered and loved by every European that knows it."

As Directors of Joint Stock Companies

Besides the public offices which he adorned as mentioned above, many respectable companies sought him as a Director, as his name on the Directorate meant economy, honesty and solvency. In addition to the Directorship of the Imperial Bank which he still holds, he was for some time its Vice-President and Governor. Of the many companies on whose directorate we find his name, the following are well-known: Indian Iron and Steel Co. Ltd., Sara Sirajgunj Railway, Bengal Telephone Corporation Ltd., Baraset Basirhat Light Railway, and the Northern Assurance Co.

For his own Community

The enviable positions of trust which he held, the public applause he received and the great honours which the Government conferred on him could not bring any change in his angle of vision. He was the same quiet and unassuming Raja in 1915 as he was the Maharaj Kumar in 1906. Even in the most glorious days of his public life, his solicitude for the uplift of his small community was as strong as ever. He rose in the public esteem but at the same time, it was a satisfaction to him that thereby he was raising his own community. As the President of the Subarnabanik Samaj, he had been able to give a strong impetus to the community, change their love of ease and luxury, and introduce into them a spirit of rivalry with the other advanced communities. Under his leadership, the Samaj has really showed many changes, and the Raja ought to be more proud of this achievement of his

than the hundred other services he had rendered to the people in general.

A Friend of the Unemployed

Very few people perhaps know that the Raja has always been a friend of the unemployed. On account of his genial temper and open-heartedness, he made a large circle of friends both among the European and the Indian officials and non-officials. The news of his personal influence and friendship with the heads of big establishments, commercial or otherwise, reached many, and the result was that every morning his house was visited by the unemployed or their relations and friends. The Raja, kind-hearted as he was, hesitated to disappoint them. Any one who could bring some credentials was recommended by him to some of his friends for a job, and the number of men who have been provided through his mediation is large to-day.

His Charities

We have so far spoken more about the qualities of his head than of his heart. We have seen him taking the most active part in the famine and flood relief organisations or in the conduct of orphanages, and making substantial contributions to the funds. These are on record but most of his charities are unrecorded. He spends a fairly large sum every month in aid of poor students, indigent widows and orphans. A large number of examinees comes to his house for examination fees and we are happy to say that most of them never go empty-handed. Whenever a fund is being raised in Calcutta for any important public purpose, his name appears there, if not on the top of the list. His contributions in aid of educational institutions within and outside his Zemin-dary, if taken together, would come to a very substantial figure. Of the donations in a lump, we may mention his share in the

gift of a lakh of rupees to the Chinsurah Water Works and Rs. 75,000 to the Benares Hindu University.

The Raja inherited most of the qualities of his stern father excepting his sternness. Those who came into personal contact with him could not but be charmed by his never failing "old world courtesy" and kind and friendly treatment. He hates maintaining an aristocratic aloofness. His simple habits and aversion to pomp and splendour come out in bold relief in every movement of his. He is freely accessible to all known to him.

One of his noteworthy habits is his observance of punctuality. Apart from keeping his engagements with outsiders to the minute, he does his own works exactly at the appointed times. In this matter, I think, he has broken the tradition of Indian Zemindars, to whom generally time does not count. This habit of his is, I think, more or less due to the training received by him from his father.

His whole day is parcelled out into clear cut divisions and for each part there is an allotted work. His appointed readers must come to him at the exact hour and he cannot brook delays. The observance of punctuality and the mechanical following of routine work have almost become a tradition in this branch of the Law family and one cannot but be struck by same. He is a man of word in the literal sense of the phrase—a virtue inherited by him from his father and grandfather.

He keeps a soft corner of his heart not only for the members of his family but also for all his dependants and employees. He is reluctant to dismiss any of his employees, of whom there are so many in the various departments of his business and he is never slow to help them in their distress. It is for this generous treatment that there are employees who have been serving the family one generation after another. He deems it his first consideration to see that the

relations of his employees are provided with suitable appointments.

He is conservative in nature and hesitates to deviate far from the groove cut by his ancestors. He adopts new ideas only after a long and a thorough examination of its pros and cons. In business matters he maintains this conservativeness and that is the main reason why when businessmen are upset by the ups and downs of the world market, the Laws remain practically unperturbed.

He bears a healthy mind in a healthy body and even in his seventieth year, he works like a youngman. May God grant him a long life and enable him to render further service to his countrymen who to-day are sorely in need of such stalwart champions.

CHUNDY CHARAN LAW

Mr. Chundy Charan Law, the son of Mr. Sham Charan Law, was born at Chinsurah in 1857. He was educated in Calcutta in the Hindu School and the Presidency College. In 1877, he left the College in order to learn mercantile business, and in 1891, after the death of his father, he was taken as a partner of the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law and Co. For a long time he was an Honorary Presidency Magistrate.

The ancestral house at Panchanantola in Chinsurah which was constructed by his great-grandfather Rajib Lochan is now in his exclusive possession. He resides in Calcutta, and so he has set apart a portion of his house at Chinsurah as a dispensary for distributing *Kaviraji* medicines to the poor, whose inconveniences and suffering for want of medicine and medical aid touched his heart. The Kaviraj who



Chundy Charan Law

dispenses the medicines also puts up at this house. The poor people resort to the house everyday to consult the Kaviraj and take medicines from him. This encouraged him to start another charitable dispensary in 1905 in another portion of the house to dispense allopathic medicines to the poor. He has also retained the services of an Asst. Surgeon for examining the patients and prescribing medicines for them every day. He has utilised another portion of the same house as a kitchen and dining-room for feeding twice a day with cooked food a large number of poor students who read in the local schools and college, and also some infirm and decrepit old men. This is an institution unique in Chinsurah and is much appreciated by the public.

In Calcutta too, he has opened a charitable dispensary at 207 Cornwallis Street in the name of his deceased daughter Lalit Kumari for free distribution of medicines to the poor. Three doctors are attached to

the dispensary for attending to the patients and prescribing medicines. He also had his share in the donation made by Raja Kristo Das (see p. 67) as the head of the Law family to the Benares Hindu University and Chinsurah Water Works.

Like the other members of the family, he is also very unostentatious in his habits and movements. He looks after the business of the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law at present and maintains its business tradition. Like Raja Kristo Das he has also a stern exterior with a soft heart within.



Ambica Charan Law

AMBICA CHARAN LAW

Mr. Ambica Charan Law, the son of Mr. Joygobind Law, C.I.E., was born at Chinsurah on July 18, 1859. He received his education in the Calcutta Hindu School, which he left after passing the Entrance Examination and entered the Presidency College. After he had acquired a fair knowledge of English, he was taken by his uncle Maharaja Durga Charan into the firm of Messrs. Prawn Kissen Law & Co. to give him training in the mercantile business. After his father's death in 1905 he was taken as a partner of the said firm, where he has been doing business with his cousins Raja Kristo Das, Raja Reshee Case and Mr. Chundy Charan Law.

He was entrusted mainly with the work of managing the office, and watching that the terms of contract or lease entered into by the firm with the various business houses

or individuals were fulfilled. The discharge of these duties entailed upon him great labour. He was not the man to leave his work for to-morrow. Sometimes he brought to his residence his office files and worked on them for hours at night. Such a keen sense of responsibility among the rich people of this province is rare. Work was a source of pleasure to him and he did not feel the need for any other diversion.

He liked to meet his friends and relatives and entertain them often with sumptuous dishes in both Indian and European style. He was a quiet man. He revered his cousins Raja Kristo Das and Raja Reshee Case so much that he would not venture into any undertaking of an important nature without the previous sanction of at least one of them.

He inherited from his father a love for zoology and often spent hours in the Zoological garden. He was a member of the governing body of the Calcutta

Zoological gardens. He was also a Vice-President of the Agricultural Society of India, an Hony. Presidency Magistrate and a non-official visitor to the Presidency Jail. The Government conferred on him a Certificate of Honour and a Durbar Medal on the occasion of His Imperial Majesty's Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1911. He served on the Executive Committees of the Calcutta Import Trade Association and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, and was for some time a Commissioner for the Port of Calcutta.

Like his cousins he possessed a charitable disposition and felt keenly for the sufferings of the poor. He readily joined his cousins in their large contribution to the Chinsurah Water Works and the Benares Hindu University referred to at p. 67. He was very particular that none, not even his sons, should know how much he was spending in charities and whom he was helping. He took an active interest as a member of the

Suvarnabanik Charitable Association. He was very simple in his habits and manners, and his plain dealings endeared him to all who came into contact with him.

APPENDIX

Maḥaraja D. C. Law's Speeches

I

THE RAILWAY BILL (Dec. 1888)

In the Imperial Legislative Council Maharaja Durga Charan said:—In December 1888, when the Railway Bill was referred to a Select Committee, I took occasion to urge upon the attention of the Hon'ble Council the great necessity that existed for both male and female passenger traffic of Railways, from whom a large revenue is derived. It is nothing but fair that some consideration should be shown to them in this respect. Judging from the deliberations of the Select Committee such as has come to my notice, it appears that the question was considered, but without any appreciable result. The only provision that has been made is a reserved compartment for females with a closet in each carriage, run-

regard to these matters, and it seems to the Lieutenant Governor that as time goes on, the Indians having occasion to use Railway may wish for more security and better accommodation. In a country like England matters of this sort are left to private enterprise and the pressure of public opinion. But the case is otherwise in India where Indians going on long journeys must practically of necessity use certain lines of rail and where they would naturally look to the Government to help them if they felt they stood in need of assistance."

It will be seen from the remarks quoted above that the necessity for having latrine accommodation in third class carriages is widely felt and it will be a matter of extreme disappointment to the millions who travel by rail but who, I repeat, have not the power to make their wants and wishes known to the Legislature if no arrangement to remove their grievances is made.

It has been said that the practical difficulties of meeting the want are insuperable.

That there are difficulties does not admit of a question. But I submit that contrivances could be made to overcome them. I may be permitted here to mention that the managing committee of the Bhavnagar Gondal Junagarh Porebunder Railway offered in 1888 for competition a prize for the best design and working model for latrines for third class carriages of Metre Gauge Railways which should get over the serious sanitary and hygienic objections that are believed by many to exist in the extension of the present system in common use in India for upper class carriages.

The consulting Engineer of the Government of India and the Director General of Railways acted as judges. In discussing the merits of the designs sent to them they considered that the requirements of the case would best be met by a combination of the good features of the several designs. They gave it also as their opinion that if conveniences in the train are considered necessary for both males and females we suggest that

the third class carriages might be arranged on the through passage system with end doors, and one latrine carriage provided at the end of the train. The latrine carriage could be in charge of a travelling sweeper, and excreta could be retained in the carriage to be removed and deposited at fixed stations *en route*.

This opinion coming as it does from Railway Engineers of such high authority shows that it is not impracticable to make a design by which sanitary and hygienic objections could be removed. If then the difficulties which were apprehended could be removed, I would venture to suggest that some provision should be made to remove the want felt by the people. Notwithstanding what has fallen from the lips of the Hon'ble member in charge of the Bill, complaints on this point, I am bound to say, are loud and numerous.

I hope the Government in the interest of the millions for whom I speak will reserve to themselves the power by which they could grant the concession later on if it could not be granted at present.

II

THE REGISTRATION OF JUTE-WARE-
HOUSES 1875

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:— He agreed with the Hon'ble Member who had last spoken that the substantive law as to the conditions on which licenses should be granted for the establishment of the Jute Warehouses should be laid down* in the Bill, and that power might be granted to the Executive Government to frame rules or bye-laws. He thought that the present opportunity should be taken to revise the scale of license fees. The present scale was undoubtedly high and he thought that the minimum ought to be reduced to Rs. 100 or Rs. 150 and the intervening rates should also be reduced.

Then with regard to the charges of occupation, the provision, as worded in the Bill, met only the case in which a person took an entire house; but there were cases in which a Warehouse was let to several parties in several

parts, the license being granted to the owner or landlord. For such cases provision ought to be made for the registration of such occupiers on the application of the owner or landlord. It was proposed to charge a registration fee of twenty rupees on occupiers. He could not see any occasion for imposing such a fee. The proceeds of license fees ought to be quite ample for all purposes, and to charge another fee on the occupier would be only to increase the burden already existing. (*Calcutta Gazette*, January 27, 1875).

III

THE METAL TOKEN BILL, 1889

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:—
The principle of the Bill was fairly discussed at the last meeting of the Council. The Bill was professedly a half measure, and like all half measures it cannot be expected to be very effective all at once; but in view of the explanation afforded by the Hon'ble Mem-

ber in charge of the Bill, I think, it should be allowed a fair trial. The provisions against the making and issue of metal tokens are stringent enough and likely to discourage the making or use of them. On the whole I see no objections to the passing of the *Bill Gazette of India*, February 9, 1889).

IV

THE MERCHANDISE MARKS BILL, 1889

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:—
As a member of the Select Committee to whom this Bill was referred for consideration, I have hardly anything to add to the remarks which have been made in the report. The Bill appears to satisfy the legitimate requirements of trade, but I must observe that a great deal will depend on its proper and considerate working before it can fulfil the objects for which action has been taken by the legislature. I am sure that the Chamber of Commerce will gladly lend its assistance to

enable the Government to carry out the objects of the Bill to the satisfaction of all parties concerned (*Gazette of India*, March 9, 1889).

V

THE SEA CUSTOMS AND TARIFF ACT
AMENDMENT BILL, 1889

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:—
The Bill though a short one is important. Considering the importance and the urgency of the measure, I only wish it had been passed before the raising of the salt duty last year which would have saved the country from a loss of several lakhs of rupees. Had this been done, the risk of the outside public having an opportunity of taking advantage of the intention of the Government in this matter would have been reduced to a minimum. Then as regards section 4, it is undoubtedly an equitable addition to the Bill. At any rate, it can do no harm to people who

might be unwilling to conform to it.

They would simply have to contract out of the Bill and would have full liberty to do so.

VI

THE BENGAL TENANCY BILL, 1883

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:—
I will make a few remarks, confining myself to some of the principal changes contemplated by this Bill.

The object of Chapter *ii* seems to be to restrain the practice said to be prevailing in Bihar of converting raiyati lands into Khamar or Zirat lands. I must say that, if it exists, it is only confined to that Province. In Lower Bengal, I may say, there is no desire on the part of the landholders to increase the area of Khamar lands. On the contrary, the landholders here retain with reluctance raiyati lands in Khas possession, simply because they cannot find tenants for them.

The provisions in Chapter *v* relating to occupancy rights are entirely new, and I must say that these changes are, highly objectionable. The existing law or custom does not support them, nor are they based upon the enactments which were superseded by the Act of 1859.

Under the existing law, a tenant has a right of holding his tenure so long as he continues to pay his rent, which, however, is liable to enhancement or reduction to fair and equitable limits under certain conditions. On failure of payment of such rent he is liable to eviction under a decree of Court. He does not appear to have ever enjoyed a status higher than this. But it is now proposed to confer on him the status of a permanent tenure-holder, without fixity of rent, at the cost of the rights of the Zemindar. The right of pre-emption reserved for the latter will serve the purpose of restraining transfers to objectionable tenants, because, in point of fact, it will involve an unnecessary outlay, for which he can never expect anything like

an adequate return. Again, a settled raiyat, as described in this chapter, may have a right of occupancy in any land in the village without any reference to the period of his occupation, and in spite of any contract under which he held it.

These and other provisions in this chapter introduce a radical change in the established law, and are calculated to create an unnecessary conflict in the relations existing between landlord and tenant.

In Chapter *viii*, which deals with ordinary raiyat the Bill confers on him a status which is entirely novel. The result of the extension of his right—one which is not unforeseen by the framers of the Bill—will be the multiplication of subordinate tenures, which would have the effect of defeating the very object for which the provisions have been made. But it is stated that the Government will put down the evil by future legislation. To my mind it seems to be more judicious not to allow the mischief to arise than to create complications, and then to find means to check them.

Then as to the question of enhancement of rent, the Bill lays down that it is to be effected either under a table of rates, or where there is no such guide, at the discretion of the Court at fair and equitable rates within certain limits, or by contract to be approved by a revenue-officer. As to the first course, I submit it will be impracticable, and, even if it be practicable, it will never be a safe and satisfactory guide. As to enhancement at the discretion of the Court, the matter remains exactly where it now is, with the addition of a restriction to the exercise of such discretion. And as to the last of these means, the validity of the contract being made conditional on the approval of a Government officer, a private settlement between landlord and tenant becomes at once a matter of considerable difficulty.

In section 93 of the Bill the provision for compensation for disturbance is quite foreign to this country, and its propriety questionable.

The effect of this innovation will practically be to preclude the landlord from all possibi-

lity of obtaining from the tenant a fair share of increment in the value of produce.

The subject is so vast and complicated that I cannot hope to do full justice to it. I have barely touched upon a few of the salient points embraced in the Bill, in order to show that the Bill, as it has been framed, is repugnant to the spirit and letter of the Permanent Regulations, which had guaranteed the rights of both Zemindars and raiyats, and to actual fact. It gives no practical facility for the recovery of rent, nor satisfactory means for enhancement, where enhancement may be fair, reasonable and perfectly justifiable. On the other hand, it enacts provisions intended, no doubt, for the benefit of the raiyat, but which, in course of time, will be found to operate prejudicially to the interest of the actual cultivators of the soil.

In conclusion, I am inclined to think that this Bill will, in practice, do more harm than good, by destroying good feeling between the Zemindar and the raiyat, and putting them

duty would lead to much increased consumption, because the incidence, as he had already said, was so low that even the poorest man did not stint himself of this necessary condiment of food. It was observable that, should the future exigencies of the State require additional revenue, it would be most unfortunate if the Government should have recourse to direct taxation. Here was a most unobjectionable source at its disposal, and to abandon it, and on what he could not but consider sentimental grounds, appeared to him to be a questionable policy. But if the reduction in salt-duty must be made, it ought to take effect from 1st June next, otherwise the loss to the traders who bought up to Wednesday, little expecting that any such serious change was contemplated, would be most heavy. One of the largest dealers in salt called upon him on Wednesday night, bitterly complaining of the action of Government in thus lowering the duty without any previous intimation. He said that he himself held about 35,000 maunds

between what he had on the river and in his *golas* in the interior, and the loss on this quantity would amount to Rs. 30,000; and many other persons were similarly situated. Mr. Durga Charan Laha thought, therefore, that some consideration ought to be shewn to the dealers in salt, who were thus doomed to serious loss from no fault of their own. He would, therefore, earnestly ask the Hon'ble the Finance Member to consider the matter.

Then, as for the import-duties, when a large portion of these duties had been already remitted, he thought that total abolition of these duties was a necessary corollary of the past policy of the Government, and the step taken by the present Government was, therefore, inevitable.

He felt bound to say that if the Government had seen its way to abolish the heavy rice-duty which now formed the only objectionable item in our customs-tariff, the advantage to the masses, in his humble opinion, by enabling them to find a better market and better

prices for their produce, would have been far greater than what they might derive from the reduction of the salt-duty.

(*Proc. Coun. Govt. India*, vol. XXII, pp. 289-291).

VIII

THE TRANSFER OF PROPERTY BILL

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Laha said that, when this Bill was brought up before the Council three weeks ago, he took occasion to thank the Select Committee for excluding Hindus and Buddhists from the scope of chapter II so far as their personal laws were concerned; but there was one important point which he wished to bring to the notice of the Hon'ble Council on the present occasion.

Section I, in the first place, exempted from the operation of the law the territories administered by the Government of Bombay, Punjab and British Burma, but left it to the discretion of those Local Governments to ex-

tend it to the whole or any part of their territories as they might deem fit. This, in his humble opinion, was highly objectionable on principle. As he understood the constitution of this Government, all laws ought to originate with the legislature, but this section practically left the task of legislation in this matter to the discretion of the Executive Governments of the provinces named. The Executive Government, as the Hon'ble Council was well aware, was differently situated from the Legislative Council, and it was not bound by any such standing orders as required this Council to allow the public a fair opportunity to discuss a measure before it was passed into law. None had shewn a more laudable anxiety than His Excellency to give the public the fullest opportunity for the discussion of legislative measures, and Durga Charan Laha believed the provisions of section 1, as he had explained, could not be in consonance with His Excellency's views.' He did not wish to move an amend-

ment on the subject, but left the matter to the consideration of the Hon'ble Council.

IX

THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE 'AMENDMENT' BILL, 1882

(The Ilbert Bill)

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law said:—
My Lord, this Bill, in my humble opinion, is a move in the right direction, and I deeply regret the feeling which it has evoked.

It seems to me absurd to suppose that the Indian officers who were deemed qualified to hold the responsible post of Magistrate and Judge, and to sit in judgment upon millions without distinction of rank, were not competent to exercise jurisdiction over European British subjects in criminal matters.

As to race prejudice, which has been already referred to, I for one think that it has little or no existence in fact. With the progress

of English education and increased intercourse with Europeans, I am glad to say this feeling has no place in the minds of educated Indians, and that any apprehension as to failure of justice in their hands ~~appears~~ appears to me wholly groundless.

What is this change, after all, that the Government propose to introduce? It is to give the same powers to a few selected Indian Civilians that Englishmen holding the same position already possess. These Indian gentlemen have had to pass the same examinations, and are considered by Government competent to perform the same executive duties, as their brother Civilians. If we refuse to put them on an equality as regards judicial powers, we shall, I maintain, be casting an unnecessary slur upon them, and lower them in the eyes of the people whom they have been deputed to rule. Much better, I say, not have introduced them into the service at all, than, once having done so, impugn their probity by saying 'You shall perform all the duties belonging to the office

of an ordinary Civilian, except that of having judicial powers in criminal cases over any European.' We must remember that it is only proposed to invest those Indian Civilians who have proved themselves to be of unexceptionable probity with the power in question, and, looking at the safeguards that are to be maintained against any possible failure of justice can any Englishman honestly say that he is afraid that his countrymen will run any greater risk of being unfairly treated at the instance of an Indian Judge than they will at that of a fellow-countryman? An Indian Civilian would naturally be always most careful and anxious to see that no injustice should happen in the case of a European, as he would know that he would be accused of race hatred or incompetence, should any fault be found with his judgment.

It has been said that the passing of the amendment will prevent the introduction of British capital and enterprise into this country. I cannot bring myself to believe that any thing of the kind will ever happen.

The same argument was employed when Act XI of 1836, bringing our European fellow-subjects within the jurisdiction of the Muffassal Civil Courts of the East India Company, was passed, and we now see how the predictions then made have been wholly falsified.

The Government of this country, has, I am aware, my Lord, been of a most liberal and lenient description for many years past; and all educated Indians are, I am sure, deeply sensible of the great debt of gratitude they owe to the English nation for the conciliatory spirit which has been shown by the rulers of this country, when they might, with impunity, have acted in so very different a manner. The aim and object of the English Government has, I believe, been to make the people of this great Empire loyal and contented subjects of our Most Gracious Queen; and this object has hitherto been gained by the wise policy pursued by your Lordship and your predecessors, of treating all Her Majesty's subjects, whether Indians of this

country or Europeans, as far as has been possible, with equality.

(*Proc. Coun. Govt. India*, vol. XXII, pp. 141-43).

X

THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CONSOLIDATION BILL

The Hon'ble Durga Charan Laha moved the following amendments to section 456 of the above bill:—

- (1) that in line one, for the words
“European British subject,” the word
“person” be substituted,
- (2) that in line four, for the words
“European British subject,” the word
“person” be substituted, and
- (3) that the words “which would have
jurisdiction over such European
British subject in respect of any
offence committed by him at the place

always procure his release by presenting a petition to any Magistrate for a summons or warrant against the person who wrongfully restrains him, and by procuring himself to be summoned as a witness.' This is all very well in theory, but experience has shown the solution suggested to be next to impracticable, especially in the Non-regulation Provinces, when the wrongfully restraining person is an official such as the Magistrate of the District or Deputy Commissioner. During 1880, no less than three separate cases of 'wrongful restraint' of this nature were brought to the notice of the Chief Court of the Punjab; and that Court was asked to interfere in the exercise of its powers of revision, but was unable to do so, as in each case the official, complained against, professed not to be acting judicially. The petitioners were in each of the cases told that their only remedy was by civil or criminal action against the Deputy Commissioner in fault. One of these cases was the illegal arrest and confinement of certain individuals

who, the Magistrate suspected, might possibly have been implicated in the matter of the Commissariat frauds now under investigation by special commission of enquiry. It was admitted by the Chief Court Judges that it seemed quite clear that the officer, if acting judicially, was acting beyond his jurisdiction; but, as he professed not to be so acting, they could not interfere. Another case took place at Simla, right under the very nose of the Viceregal Council and the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and yet the sufferers could obtain no redress of an immediate nature. The victims were residents and subjects of a foreign state whom the Superintendent of Hill States deemed guilty of having committed an offence in the jurisdiction of another Hill State. Happening to be in Simla, a warrant was issued for their arrest, and they were taken into custody and released on heavy bail to appear before the Superintendent of Hill States on a certain

date. Before that date an application was made by one of the leading counsel of the Lahore Bar before the Judges of the Chief Court, but, in so much as the Superintendent of Hill States professed to be acting politically, and therefore not judicially, the Bench expressed their inability to interfere. They, however, were forced to admit that the Superintendent of Hill States had no power, political or otherwise, to act as he had done, and that the remedy in the hands of the arrested was either a civil or criminal action. The Raja, whose subjects the men were, protested against the action of the Political Agent and demanded the extradition of the men, and they thus escaped an illegal trial and, probably, a sentence which would undoubtedly be *ultra vires*.

* * * * *

These instances above quoted are not solitary or exceptional instances of the abuse of power by executive officers; and what has occurred in the Punjab may happen, in fact,

has, in other forms, taken place in Bombay and elsewhere in India.

The natural tendency of the Executive in India is to overlook the strict provisions of the law, when specially interested in the carrying out of any policy and in the direction of arbitrary action. The difficulty is to keep this tendency in check, without entirely tying the hands of the executive officers. That some such check is necessary few will deny; and it is perfectly clear, from the cases we have cited, that cases of oppression through illegal action have occurred for which there is no simple preventative. The remedy is simple, namely, to enact a general provision similar to that which protects the European British subject. The principle that all sorts and conditions of men should be treated alike in the eye of the law is well acknowledged. The Queen's proclamation professed to give justice to every inhabitant of India without respect to class, creed or nationality, and, consequently, the extension

of this required protection to the Indian can not justly or logically be denied to him.

Of course, it will still be necessary to leave in the hands of the Viceroy those exceptional powers which are exercised by the issuing of a Secretary's warrant; but, possibly, in some of the less civilised, and wilder of our Frontier Districts, it may be necessary to give the District officer special powers, to be exercised only in cases of special political emergency; but this can be done by special regulation. But, notwithstanding the above possible necessity, it seems extremely necessary that the Indian should be similarly protected as his European fellow-subject or fellow-sojourner.

He was afraid that there were many cases of this kind which had not reached the public.

[His Excellency the President said among other things "I trust that, without adopting the amendment of my Hon'ble friend Durga Charan Laha, because it raises large and difficult questions which we are not in a position to deal with at the present moment, the Council will pass this Bill....."]

The motion (of Maharaja) was put and negatived.]

XI

MAHARAJA'S EVIDENCE BEFORE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

1877

Maharaja Durga Charan Law in his evidence before the Public Service Commission said that he was a merchant and Zeminder. His business in Calcutta was chiefly imports for more than forty years. Formerly his business was chiefly in imports, but now it was in merchandise goods or piece-goods, but metals very seldom. He could not say exactly when it was, but several years ago, he paid frequent visits to the Custom House on business, and saw no cause to complain against the efficiency of the department. He could speak only of the department which concerned his interest. Whether or not there ought to be a European head of the department would depend upon the judgment of the Government, but he could say this, that if an Indian were placed at the head of the depart-

ment, the administration would go on satisfactorily, and he saw no reason to think that the administration would be inefficient if a capable Indian were placed at the head of the department. If an Indian Civilian who had been educated and trained in England, were placed at the head of the department, he thought that the work would go on satisfactorily. Several years ago there was a Bengali gentleman as assistant Collector.

With regard to appraisership, he said that there were Indians in merchant offices who were quite capable of discharging the duties. They would be men who could be trusted and who would have the necessary technical knowledge. Some years ago there were Indian appraisers, but they did not turn out well because they were not paid well. They were common people without a sense of respectability or character—men without principles. They used to draw a salary of Rs. 30 to 50 a month.

As to the preventive service, it did not require much education, but the habit of

his countrymen (that is the Hindus) stood much in the way of performing the duties satisfactorily. In the case of Mahomedans it would be quite different. The prejudices his countrymen had, were against remaining on board night and day, then they would have to take food sent on board which he did not think would be agreeable to the generality of them; there would be a few who would come forward to do the work under such circumstances. He was speaking generally. There was another difficulty in the way of his countrymen and that was that they would have to deal with rough sea-faring men.

With regard to the Accounts Department in the Custom House, he said that the responsibility vested with cash-keepers, and he did not see that any responsibility was attached to the Accounts Department. An accountant had to deal with paper, ink and pen. Indians would answer very well for these posts.

He had no Europeans employed in his commercial establishment, but he had a

European manager at Morelgunge for his landed property. He gave him Rs. 400 a month. He employed him because he could not get at the time an efficient Indian to do the work.

He exported indigo occasionally and of late years. The men he employed as sirkars to take delivery of goods from the jetties and convey them to the godowns were honest men. They get about Rs. 30 a month. The European appraisers in the Custom House get Rs. 450 a month. He did not like to lay down any rules, but they could secure the services of a qualified Indian appraiser on Rs. 300 a month. He thought that Rs. 150 to Rs. 300 would offer a sufficient range of salary to secure an honest Indian appraiser. The changes ought to be introduced gradually not at once to see how they answer. He did not think it would be a costly arrangement, and there was no fear of any loss to the Government. The highest salary he pays to an Indian employee is Rs. 300, sometimes Rs. 500. Nowadays his

sous and nephews undertook the most responsible duties of his firm.

Mr. Joygobind Law's Speeches

I

THE INDIAN STAMP BILL, 1879.

The Hon'ble Mr. Joygobind Law said:—
“It strikes me that there will be some injustice done by this Bill. It is in regard to the transfer of a lease. Why should the transfer of a lease cost more money in stamps than a lease of land. That is the objection which occurs to me. Why should it be charged with a conveyance stamp? There are some leases which are charged as conveyances, but there are others which are charged with a five-rupee stamp. This is the only objection I have to make.”

II

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE BILL

(March 19th, 1898)

The Hon'ble Mr. Joygobind Law said:—
My Lord, in considering the Bill as a whole, there is one fact which stands out con-

spicuously and that is that it embodies to a great extent the suggestions of the executive officers of the Government, and very little of the recommendation of the non-official communities. Naturally, those who are charged with the administration of a district or division and are responsible for its peace, would wish to be possessed of as much power as possible, but the question arises whether those who are governed would view it in the same light; and from the number of amendments on the notice-paper it is apparent that that is not the case. Now, I do not wish to be misunderstood, I am far from suggesting that governing classes wish to have powers for the purpose of misusing them, on the contrary, I will give them credit for the best intentions. But, My Lord, so long as human nature is what it is, there will always be some danger of misuse, not intentional misuse but sometimes misuse with the best motives. Therefore, My Lord, it is absolutely necessary that safeguards should be provided. The revisional power of the High

Courts is one of these safeguards; but it is now intended to take it away to a certain extent. Look at clause 108, empowering magistrates to require person to show cause ~~w'hy~~ they should not be bound down for good behaviour. Now, this appears to me to be going behind the substantive law which was passed the other day. What we are saying to the person concerned is in fact something like this: you are charged with such and such offence; we are not going to put you on trial and have you convicted, but we order that you find surety, and if you fail to do so, you must go to jail, and this notwithstanding the fact that the person has never been put on his trial. Now, these are a few instances which await consideration, and in considering them, I have no doubt, the Council will look at the clauses of the Bill, not only from the point of view of the administrators and the executive officers, but also from that of those who will be affected by them. It is also to be remembered that the Council is not legislating in view of an emergency.

I am afraid this would be rather a dangerous power to give to the police. I can quite believe my friend the Hon'ble Sir Griffith Evans stating that magistrates may sometimes think it would be a good thing to call a Zemindar to account, whether he was concerned in the matter or not or whether there was reliable evidence or not, and that by merely summoning him, disturbance would be put an end to by him sometimes either by concessions or by something else, or by spending money. Therefore, I am quite of the Hon'ble Sir Griffith Evans' opinion in thinking that it would be rather dangerous for a Zemindar to be in such a position. As regards bogus cases, it is true they are likely to turn up anywhere, but in this particular case, it would entail an amount of hardship which would not occur in other cases, where one has to defend himself at his place of abode.

III

EPIDEMIC DISEASES BILL

The Hon'ble Mr. Joygobind Law said:—
My Lord, in connection with this Bill I wish to say a few words. There is a good deal of alarm in the town in respect of the pilgrimages to Mecca. I see from the papers that the Madras Government has asked the sanction of the Government of India for stopping pilgrimages altogether from Madras, and it would allay the alarm very much if an assurance could be given by Government that pilgrimages would be prohibited from Calcutta also. I need hardly say that pilgrimage is a great danger and requires drastic remedies. It is no doubt a serious thing to prohibit pilgrimages, but then the danger is so great that any measures that may be taken to guard against it would be welcomed by the people.—*Gazette of India*, Feb'y. 6, 1897.

NOTE RE. DURGA PUJA HOLIDAYS

In the year 1861 the Bengal Chamber of Commerce made an attempt to curtail the Durga Puja holidays and made a representation to the Government. A Committee was accordingly formed consisting of Mr. Harvey, Sub-Treasurer, Mr. W. S. FitzWilliam, a member of the Chamber, and the late Hon'ble Prosunno Kumar Tagore. This Committee recommended the grant of 32 days including a general holiday of 10 days during Durga Puja. The Government of India in supercession of all previous orders allowed 27 days general holidays and 12 days for the Durga Puja. Some slight alterations were afterwards made in these holidays in 1862 and 1867.

In 1874 the Bengal Chamber again asked the Government to reduce the Durga Puja holidays from 12 to 7 days, and in 1878 a further reduction was asked for, from 12 to 4 days. To settle this question a Committee was appointed by the Government com-

posed of the Hon'ble H. L. Dampier, President; C. J. Brookes, Esqr.; W. H. Brown, Esqr.; C. E. S. Cochrane, Esqr.; Durga Churn Law, Esqr.; J. D. Maclean, Esqr.; the Hon'ble C. C. Morgan; Hon'ble Rai Kristo Das Pal Bahadur, C.I.E.; G. Yule, Esqr. and F. W. Badcock, Esqr., as Secretary. Babu Kristo Das and Durga Churn jointly wrote dissentient minute protesting against the proposal of the Chamber.

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CORRECTION SLIP

Page 44 l. 21 for *all* read *no*.

„ 62 l. 3 „ *1894* „ *1849*

